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General Assembly
Sixty-second session

Official Records

5th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 25 September 2007, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Address by Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rajapaksa (*spoke in Sinhala; English text provided by the delegation*) I am pleased to be able to address the global community on the first day of the current session of the General Assembly of the United Nations.

Please accept my congratulations, Sir, on your assumption of the high office of the President of the sixty-second session. To Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, I wish to convey Sri Lanka's gratitude for her astute leadership of the sixty-first session.

Sri Lanka can boast of a very old and advanced civilization, similar to Greek, Roman and Nile Valley civilizations. One of the important characteristics of our civilization is the use of living languages such as Sinhala and Tamil, two languages used by many even today. I therefore consider it my obligation to use Sinhala, a living language, to address the General Assembly.

Let me begin by quoting the immortal words of Sir Isaac Newton: "We build too many walls and not enough bridges". We all became Members of an Organization that was created to let all our voices be heard and to avoid an approach aimed at resolving problems through violence, revenge and blame. Yet we see a trend to find fault, to place countries in the dock and penalize those who do not fall into line. Instead of seeking solutions through cooperation, we have often created suspicion and built walls between ourselves through double standards.

I am proud to inform the Assembly that, despite the significant challenge posed by the ongoing conflict with a ruthless terrorist group in the north of our country, we have freed the Eastern Province from terrorism and restored law and order there. My Government has already launched a massive programme of rehabilitation and reconstruction in the east. We propose to make the Eastern Province of Sri Lanka a model for development and rehabilitation, essentially through our own effort but also with the assistance of all donors. We are taking steps to return the usurped rights of the people by conducting provincial and local Government elections in the east early next year. There is a clear opportunity for the international community to play a vital role in breaking the cycle of conflict by focusing on development.

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We launched military operations only to exert pressure on terrorists in order to convince them that it would not be possible for them to obtain a military victory. Our goal remains a negotiated and honourable end to this unfortunate conflict. I must say that the All Party Representative Committee is working successfully towards it.

Sri Lanka was one of the first developing countries to promote universal health and education, gender equality and social mobilization. We have been able to achieve exceptional socio-economic indicators — way ahead of those normally expected of a country in the lower-middle income range — and are on the way to achieving or surpassing many of the Millennium Development Goals. It is a beautiful sight on our rural roads to see thousands of children in clean white uniforms heading for school. It is a fine example of our success in achieving education for all.

Despite 25 years of brutal terrorism, we have been able to continue with this social development. My Government maintains a policy of openness and cooperation with all international human rights mechanisms, and a number of high-level officials have visited Sri Lanka recently. Sri Lanka's ancient civilization was rooted in the Buddhist principles of metta and ahimsa — metta being loving kindness to all living beings and ahimsa being a deep respect for life. Human rights have been an essential part of our great cultural tradition for millennia. It is therefore nothing new for us to protect human rights. Women in pre-colonial Sri Lanka enjoyed rights that are prescribed under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women — including rights of property ownership and inheritance rights. It was certainly no accident that Sri Lanka produced the first democratically elected woman Prime Minister in the world in 1960.

Guided by the principles of Buddhism, we have long respected the rights of our fellow human beings. It has therefore not been necessary for us to experience global wars or the deaths of millions to learn to recognize their value. My country has no record of inflicting misery on fellow human beings for the purpose of empire-building, for commercial advantage or for religious righteousness. Sri Lanka, as one of the founding members of the Human Rights Council, believes that human rights are too important to be used as a tool to victimize States for political advantage. It is essential that international action to facilitate compliance with human rights standards be fair and even-handed. Human rights have to be protected and advanced for their own sake, not for political gain.

Even as we are gathered here, State sovereignty, civil society and the rule of law are increasingly being threatened by terrorism and other illegal and illicit activities in many countries. We need to be vigilant about these activities. Although the United Nations system has set up mechanisms to deal with many of these problems, the capacity of the United Nations to address these challenges effectively has been brought into question. There are many Member States represented in the Assembly today that have first-hand experience of the havoc caused by brutish terrorism, which has stretched out its claws to many corners of the world to mar innocent lives. All terrorist attacks — whether in New York, Mumbai, Cairo, London or Colombo — are acts that threaten the democratic way of life, and must be condemned unreservedly.

Terrorism anywhere is terrorism. There is nothing good in terrorism. Sri Lanka has taken an up-front position in the global community's efforts to deal with terrorism. We have become party to 11 of the 13 United Nations conventions for the suppression of various acts of terrorism. We think that the comprehensive convention on international terrorism — which, in our view, remains a priority — is a hostage to endless discussion. I emphasize that we must conclude those negotiations soon.

In whatever continent there are conflicts, those will affect the world economy. Peace in the Middle East would have a great impact on our economy. Solutions sought for conflicts in various countries must be indigenous. Otherwise, even if the international community is appeased, people in the countries saddled with conflicts will not be satisfied. That would be a blow to democracy. At this point, we must focus our attention on the Palestinians who are striving for an independent State. The world community must help them to manage their country without any undue influence.

We strongly support the strengthening of United Nations mechanisms for countering fund-raising for illegal and illicit activities. We encourage the Secretary-General to allocate more resources to this area, especially to enhance technical skills in countries that do not have such skills. Many developing countries would benefit from such assistance. We need

to have a better mechanism to provide solutions to the problems confronting us. Support from all Member States should be obtained for this purpose.

The United Nations has a mixed record of achievements. As resources received by the United Nations are limited, it has been only possible to deliver limited results. We need to focus on these as they often have been characterized by countless, poorly coordinated, ineffectively designed, ineptly staffed and overlapping programmes, with unnecessary inter-agency competition. The United Nations must always remember that its primary function is to render assistance for the well-being of its Member States.

We have rounded the Development Decade declared by the General Assembly. My country has declared the "Mahinda Chintana" 10-year vision to usher in a new Sri Lanka in line with those goals. Through that we are committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. We have accorded priority to the areas liberated from terrorism, those that have been devastated by natural disasters and rural areas lagging behind in development. However, it is a huge challenge for us to fill the gap created by the loss of human lives arising out of disasters.

We are implementing a rural development initiative based on "Maga Neguma", the road development programme, and "Gama Neguma", the rural reawakening programme and a national infrastructure development initiative. The "Mahinda Chintana" 10-year development vision includes continuous qualitative upgrading of education and health programmes in all areas, livelihood initiatives for low-income groups, and broad social welfare programmes covering poor and disadvantaged members of society, aimed specially at children and women. We also implement programmes to protect our people from narcotic drugs and diseases transmitted through social contact.

The working population, as well as low-income and poor groups in developing countries such as ours, face tough challenges due to escalating world oil prices and increases in the prices of essential food items. Similarly, we are severely affected by natural disasters and uncertainties in the world financial markets. For those reasons, it has become a challenge to achieve the Millennium Development Goals declared by the Assembly.

The World Bank, established for economic development, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which was set up for financial stability, and other regional banks established at the same time as this world organization, all need to implement new programmes to assist the countries affected by these challenges. Priority must be given to providing resources for this purpose.

I believe that our obligation as global leaders at these sessions of the General Assembly, is to commit ourselves to programmes that will eradicate terrorism, establish human-welfare-oriented development, establish democracy and ensure there is hope for low-income groups for economic development. Accordingly, I appeal to the global community to make the sixty-second session the beginning of a new chapter, rather than just another session.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Duarte Frutos, President of the Republic of Paraguay

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Paraguay.

Mr. Duarte Frutos, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nicanor Duarte Frutos, President of the Republic of Paraguay, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Duarte Frutos (*spoke in Spanish*): The Government of Paraguay comes to the Assembly to reaffirm its importance in examining the world situation. We have also come in order to further strengthen the United Nations as a body fit to represent the interests of all countries and ensure the effectiveness of international law.

For that reason, Sir, I express my support for your successful presidency of the General Assembly at its

sixty-second session. It is urgent for us to contribute not only to meeting the objectives of the United Nations, but also to ensuring that the principles governing its functioning truly find expression. The world needs a better, more just and brotherly world order now.

From this lofty universal rostrum, we customarily speak with eloquent urgency, but the practice of States, in particular of the most powerful, has not always been one of cooperating in order to overcome the uncertainties that overshadow our future.

In recent sessions of the Assembly, we have focused on the challenges of the new millennium, but while we have been looking far ahead, in the first decade of this new century alone, relations among civilizations have clearly been marred by an absence of peace and harmony.

It has not mattered that more than half of the world's population continues to live in poverty. Of greater importance has been the senseless squandering of money on weapons and the terrible effect this has had on the world economy. Note how the price of oil has rapidly increased and how countries, such as ours, which do not produce oil, have had to make great sacrifices. How much money could have been used to alleviate poverty! As long as capital is concentrated in one area and poverty continues to rise, world peace will be precarious.

In Paraguay, in South America, we are calling for the globalization of democracy combined with social development. We are calling for the universalization of security based on respect for human rights and on the dignity of human life.

In this way we hope to build a regional community and a global union, which will work together to eradicate hunger and extreme poverty, and which will effectively cooperate to promote the participation of all in prosperity by providing quality education and a system of social protection without exclusion.

In Paraguay, we are struggling for economic stability, for political stability and for social peace. With these ideals, I have been working very hard at the head of the Government to make significant changes and score important advances. We have sought radical change beyond what is needed by the Paraguayan society. The achievements we have attained require that we continue the progressive policy to which we committed ourselves when we assumed office.

Since we took office in 2003, following a turbulent transition that was constantly undermined by violence and conspiracy, Paraguay has institutionalized political stability — not an easy task in an environment of political division and with a parliament that did not always meet its responsibilities in governing jointly. Nevertheless, political stability has been, and continues to be, one of the defining characteristics of our Government. Through great perseverance, we have succeeded in permanently institutionalizing political stability. We did so because I understood that stability had to be the framework for achieving economic development, which is so crucial to achieving our plans for incremental growth. Having achieved economic stability, we began a process of growth of historic proportions. After 20 years, Paraguay was able to overcome stagnation. Despite the terrible drought in the country, which continues to this day, Paraguay experienced an average annual rate of economic growth of 4 per cent for the period 2003-2007.

Moreover, my country has also recorded a budgetary surplus. We have also markedly improved our tax receipts and are waging a difficult battle to control inflation. Through that policy, not only have we considerably increased our financial reserves, which have tripled, but for the first time in its history Paraguay is today able to pay its foreign debt in full and still continue to hold international reserves. Our exports are at a historical high, having doubled during my term of office. Another relevant factor has been the sustained growth in per capita production, which will rise from $915 to $1,800 by the end of my mandate, in 2008.

More generally, the Government has been pursuing plans aimed at strengthening various areas of the economy, including the industrial, commercial and service sectors. We have encouraged the transformation of the country's economy while coordinating and integrating the various sectors of production and facilitating the distribution, circulation and consumption of domestically produced goods. We have thereby been able to lower the rate of poverty we inherited from previous Governments — which is now approaching 38 per cent, down from the 46 per cent at which it stood in 2003.

However, the poverty and marginalization of millions of our fellow citizens continues to be the most obvious threat to democracy and political stability in Paraguay as well as the region. Our belief that we will continue to overcome poverty is due to the Government's significant investment in society. Never before have so many houses been built nor more resources devoted to the most vulnerable members of our society. Next year, we will earmark 50 per cent of the country's budget for the fight to reduce poverty.

As a multi-ethnic country, we have not ignored the education of our indigenous citizens. We have built schools and established special programmes. As a bilingual country, we have both ensured Guaraní-language education at all levels and worked towards having it recognized as a third official language of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR). Prior to the establishment of present-day borders, Guaraní was also spoken in Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and Bolivia.

The Government over which I preside has ensured unfettered political freedom, as well as freedom of the press, association and expression. Unfortunately, the media have not always taken advantage of the freedom of the press in order to become channels for truthful information, serious and responsible opinion and constructive and reasoned criticism — much less to overcome its vestigial Manichaeism and instead to become a source of culture and daily provider of knowledge and ethical values.

Political parties are independent and represented in the parliament. Those not in parliament exercise their rights freely as new political parties are formed.

There is in fact pluralism in Paraguay, although the absence of an adequate civic culture on the part of most political actors has kept it from genuinely contributing to the essential consensus needed to defend the country's overall interests and promoting equitable development within it. Unfortunately, remnants of fascism and conservatism continue to hamper coexistence in an environment of diversity and difference, while also conspiring against the country's progress.

Nevertheless, our struggle for a participatory and inclusive democracy that promotes social justice has transformed the governing party. Today's governing party is promoting an advanced philosophy of social change. It is also the political organization generating renewal and social mobilization to overcome the old party-based oligarchy that was so damaging to Paraguay. The party has therefore assumed responsibility for transforming the system whereby the State and its policies were subjugated to individual interests. Through its political independence, the party is in a position to able to eliminate illegitimate privileges and the illicit groups that control the economy, finances and large land holdings.

We are continuing to modernize Paraguay by linking the entire country with roads, exponentially expanding its economy and ensuring that all citizens become part of the nation's social capital and possess the qualities and competitiveness required by today's societies. Most of the people of Paraguay understand that the historic steps we have taken in that direction must continue and become irreversible. Today, anarchy, demagoguery and theological feudalism pose a regressive threat to peace, the secular State, the rule of law and the institutional order we are building.

Paraguay is the most open and dynamic country with regard to the regional integration agenda. Our support for MERCOSUR is a clear reflection of our national policy. We believe in MERCOSUR. We believe in regional integration. We believe in the possibility of Latin America having a louder voice in the world in order to manage and humanize the process of globalization.

My Government also endorses and supports the proposed union of South American nations, which will above all make us stronger in claiming and defending our rights in an environment of asymmetrical globalization and better able to contribute to world peace and more equitable distribution of international trade and financing for development.

The international mobilization of financial and technological resources is today threatening the stability and overall progress of countries. Speculative investments flow to countries and regions where the work force is subjected to exploitation. Then comes the invasion; and, through unfair competition, our industries are damaged and shut down. At the same time, our raw materials are undervalued. What capital should do is to promote industrialization, or at least ensure that the terms of trade become fairer instead of being imposed unilaterally.

Mr. Ehouzou (Benin), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We have to change this trend. The international economic order should promote a more equitable world economy. Through solidarity, cooperation and fair treatment, all countries of the world should be admitted into the club of development. In Latin America, and in Paraguay, we don't need charity; we need markets, transparency, technology, and the lifting of protective trade barriers.

The United Nations should reflect this philosophy. For this reason, its reform cannot be delayed any longer. Its priority concerns should not be war, armed conflict or even terrorism, whether real or strategic. On the contrary, its priorities should be programmes to end poverty, ignorance and unemployment. We must educate and distribute in order to build a culture of democratic participation in the wealth of humanity.

Paraguay, like the other 30 landlocked developing countries, continues to suffer marginalization and a lack of proper access to international markets. The absence of preferential treatment for us from the more developed economies has denied us a more competitive participation in trade, as well as, access to quotas and to higher tariffs.

Paraguay is not only aware of the serious consequences of climate change; it also suffers from them. Proof of this is the catastrophe our country is suffering through prolonged drought and the dreadful fires that have destroyed a major part of our territory. I take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude on behalf of my people and my Government to the countries that have come to our aid in this national emergency. In particular, I would like to thank, from this rostrum, my friend Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, President of Brazil, Nestor Kirchner, President of Argentina, my friend President Chavez of Venezuela, and the other heads of Government and multilateral organizations that have worked with us.

Paraguay recognizes the importance of including gender issues in the agenda of the United Nations and the need for effective coordination among all agencies and organs in the United Nations system in addressing the situation of women in the world, particularly in developing countries. Increasingly and emphatically, we reject existing inequalities between men and women whether they be political, economic, social or cultural. Irrespective of the domestic actions we take to combat discrimination, we believe that the United Nations is the most appropriate forum for designing programmes in support of national policies to bring about true equality.

The Government of Paraguay would also like to take this opportunity to express once again for its support for the request for admission into the United Nations of the Republic of China, Taiwan, a nation that has continued to struggle for its freedom and wishes to be a member of the United Nations in accordance with Rules 59 and 60 of the Provisional Rules of the Security Council and Article 4 of the United Nations Charter.

In conclusion, inequalities among our peoples are not part of the human condition. On the contrary, they are the result of iniquitous relations that separate us and draw us apart. That being the case, we need only to show determination in building a universal community marked by greater equanimity and balance. This determination should be given expression by governments and citizens and should draw on the concerted efforts of States and civil society.

What we are seeing, however, is that the countries that have most want more. Their humanism is disguised in hand-outs and philanthropy when what the world needs is greater solidarity and justice. We need to share science and technology; we need to share markets. The pretence of cooperation to help countries achieve balanced development is not only denounced in fruitless rhetoric; it is also exposed in protectionism and in investment choices.

As long as this bipolar situation continues to prevail in the world, an organization such as the United Nations serves little purpose. Only when the powerful countries stop taking advantage of the less powerful countries will the United Nations be able to have a true impact on the lives of people.

This alternative is the process that we are involved in today. Many Governments representing countries in the Third World have begun to seek our own freedom. We are drawing a new map on the international scene.

I am compelled to mention this historic challenge in my final statement to the General Assembly of the United Nations because on 15 August 2008, I will hand over power to the new Government in my country. But I will continue to fight with greater fervour to help change the world. I am committed as ever to the

difficult struggle to build a new world order, to ensure equality, social justice and solidarity for all countries, for all women and for all men. I will fight for their emancipation and their progress.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Paraguay for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nicanor Duarte Frutos, President of the Republic of Paraguay, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Senegal.

Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency, Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Wade (*spoke in French*): Senegal welcomes Mr. Kerim's election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. We congratulate him and will support him as he carries out his important responsibilities. His predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa of the Kingdom of Bahrain, a country which is a friend to Senegal, deserves our tribute and appreciation for her outstanding contribution, throughout her term of office, to the revitalization of the General Assembly.

I also would like to take a moment to acknowledge my brothers and sisters in the diaspora, who this year commemorated the 200th anniversary of the abolition of slavery. That shameful and repugnant trade constituted the worst of attacks on the dignity of the human person, as did its continuation, colonization. That is why I would now solemnly warn against horrendous revisionist arguments that attempt in vain to falsify history. Colonialism in its design and exclusive logic of domination, exploitation and enslavement cannot boast of any civilizing mission or any positive fallout, because by its very nature it is a negation of the human condition. We must remain vigilant and mobilized. In Senegal we say yes, we will forgive, but we will not forget or agree to manipulation.

The high-level discussion we held on 24 September on the serious issue of climate change confirms once again the terrible threat that is hanging over our planet. I therefore welcome the initiative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, to put this crucial issue at the very heart of our agenda. We have all seen the damage done. Mankind has not been wise. We have, with greater or lesser awareness, destroyed this Earth which God has lent to us. We must beseech his forgiveness.

Combating climate change demands innovative solutions, which must take into account the special situation of countries that are not significant polluters but which nevertheless suffer from the serious consequences of this phenomenon of the modern age.

Senegal is aware of its responsibility to join the struggle against pollution. Therefore, in exploiting our mineral resources, we take particular care to restore the ecosystem and to use non-polluting practices and technologies. We have also prohibited the importation of used cars more than five years old and of household appliances that pollute. As we have already mentioned, we do not want Africa to be a dumping ground for outdated technology from Europe or elsewhere.

We are also gradually establishing a policy of combating coastal erosion. On the Atlantic coast, at the high-tide line, we are building a reinforced concrete wall on the granite or clayey base of the continental shelf, 2.5 to 3 metres deep by 40 centimetres thick, to slow the advance of the sea. Experts say that the wall will stop the sea's advance for 50 to 100 years. We have done this on an experimental basis, since it is very expensive. The wall costs $2,000 per metre. We have constructed 2 kilometres as an example, to show that it is possible, because we consider it the ultimate weapon.

We are also launching a project for ports leading into free zones, alternating with tourist complexes, along the Atlantic coast; that is also a way of stopping the advance of the sea. Coastal erosion, from Morocco to Mauritania to Senegal, is a threat which the international community must take very seriously.

In the Sahel region, we Africans are also planting what we call the great green wall, 7,000 kilometres

long by 150 kilometres wide from Dakar to Djibouti. We have not waited; each of us in our own country has begun to create the "wall". The European Union and France, as Mr. Sarkozy has said, are ready to provide us with loans to help with the wall in order to stop the encroaching Sahel and the process of desertification.

We have also tried to take advantage of the billions of tons of water that, each year during the rainy season, fall on the Sahel and are absorbed by the earth or flow into the sea. In Senegal we have therefore built holding basins in the most low-lying areas, where runoff water accumulates. We have built 250 of these basins; we are walking the walk. The African countries meeting in Bamako have decided to implement this programme, from Dakar to Djibouti, to create such a "wall" to stop the encroaching desert.

At Senegal's initiative, non-oil-producing countries have now established an association that we call the Green OPEC, with the aim of protecting our interests. We call on the international community to take on the excess costs with which we have been burdened owing to increases in the price of oil. We also want to turn Africa towards producing biofuels. For this reason, I welcome the launch, here in New York on 2 March 2007, of the International Biofuels Forum. As President of the African Non-Petroleum Producers Association, I solemnly request that all of the Forum's initiatives and participants pursue our common goal of promoting alternative energy sources.

As we pursue economic and social development in the South, African countries in particular continue to face insurmountable obstacles, such as agricultural subsidies in developed countries. We have already talked about that subject enough. Paradoxically, at the same time that our countries are being forced to open their markets in the name of free trade, developed countries are subsidizing their own products, so we are no longer able to export our products to the developed world.

As I said at the Group of Eight summit in Heiligendamm, Germany, Africa is not poor. It has been impoverished by unjust trade practices and by the exploitation of its resources, which are not bought at their true price. I wish to add that trade measures are not in themselves enough to wipe out the injustice that has been done. We also need genuine economic measures.

If we want to fend off the advance of poverty, we must be creative. But first, what is poverty? It is certainly not an income of less than a dollar a day, the definition advocated by the United Nations. Poverty, in my view, is a set of unmet needs. Poverty is a leaky roof, or not having a roof over one's head at all. It is poor-quality food, no drinking water, no clothing, no health care, no education or training. Lastly, being poor is not having a clean environment. That is what I call the cluster of needs, which is an entire set of needs and, as we can see, not just a monetary assessment.

What are we in Senegal doing? We have launched a programme to build housing, called the Jaxxay plan, under the slogan of "one family, one roof". We build nice, affordable homes. For less than $70 a month, people can become homeowners in Senegal. The development in which we are building those houses provides health, education and other services. That is how we are trying to combat poverty.

Allow me to turn to the digital revolution. We believe that Africa has a great opportunity, because the digital revolution is happening now. The Internet contains all the knowledge in the world. Africans must therefore have access to the Internet for their training, information and educational needs and in their universities and schools. For that reason, as Africa's representative to the World Summit on the Information Society, organized by the International Telecommunication Union in Geneva in 2003, I proposed a Global Digital Solidarity Fund to bridge the digital gap that separates us from the developed world. After many ups and downs, the Fund is now supported by all of the Members of the United Nations. Unfortunately, the majority have not yet formalized their acceptance of this Fund or have begun paying into it. However, all countries in principle are members of this Fund, which seeks to provide computers to Africa and to be involved in various programmes, like healthcare telematics.

In Geneva we launched what is called the Geneva Principle, which asks countries and producers of information and communication technology to voluntarily donate one per cent of the amount of each transaction to the Digital Solidarity Fund.

Let us now discuss the Security Council and the need for Africa to have a seat therein, irrespective of any question of reform. It is the only continent which is not represented in the Security Council, even though

it has been said that 70 per cent of the Council's business involves Africa.

Today, Senegal is at peace — I shall not dwell on this — and we are trying to provide the materials and the personnel needed for Darfur. Senegal is increasing its contingent from 150 to 1,600 and is also providing all the police for the operation conducted by the African Union and the United Nations.

The Middle East situation still gives serious concern and I wish to reconfirm Senegal's unwavering support for the just cause of the Palestinian people in their legitimate quest for a viable State. We support all efforts to that end.

Remembering the last two wars, we must really try to achieve peace. Peace is not just the absence of war as somebody said this morning. We must combat war in the minds of men, particularly young people.

In March 2008, Senegal will have the honour of hosting the eleventh Islamic Summit Conference. It is, therefore, my deepest hope that we will make progress towards achieving peace in accordance with our religion and the Qur'an. I have already proposed an Islamic-Christian dialogue, which would be a first step towards dialogue among peoples. We believe that if the leaders of the world meet together and make a real appeal for tolerance as a legacy from this generation to future generations, then we will have taken a step forwards towards understanding among the various religions. This is absolutely essential to the establishment of peace.

We know that Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) oligopoly increases the price of oil as it wishes by manipulating supply — I know this because I am an economist. I realize that it is the law of the market, but the rest of us suffer from it. I propose that whenever OPEC increases the price of oil, it voluntarily add 2 per cent, but not as a tax: 1 per cent to combat poverty and 1 per cent to combat environmental degradation. Out of the $200 million of profits from Africa, this would be at least $40 million and you won't feel it more than you do just now, because a barrel which cost $29 in December 2003 now costs over $81.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Senegal for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mbeki: Let me begin by adding my voice to the many salutations directed to Mr. Ban Ki-moon on being elected as the Secretary-General of the United Nations. I wish him a fruitful tenure of office, trusting that through his work the poor of the world will have good reason to increase their confidence in this Organization of the nations of the world.

Again, I reiterate the many thanks to Her Excellency Ms. Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, for the good work she did as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. Equally, my congratulations go to Mr. Srgjan Kerim on his election as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session.

We meet here today, under the theme of responding to climate change, at this session, which marks the half-way point in the freely agreed period during which the nations of the world committed themselves to work, individually and collectively, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Billions of the people of the world know as a matter of fact that the consequences of climate change — be it droughts, floods or unpredictable and extreme weather patterns — undermine our common efforts to achieve the MDGs. Today, we all understand that the costs of doing nothing about climate change far outweigh those of taking concrete measures to address this challenge. It is clear that delaying action on this matter of climate change will hit poor countries and communities hardest. Yet the pace of climate change

negotiations is out of step with the urgency indicated by science.

I would therefore urge that we collectively aim for a significant advance in the multilateral negotiations when our negotiators meet in Bali in December this year. Together, we must ensure that we build a fair, effective, flexible and inclusive climate regime under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its Kyoto Protocol, and we must agree to this as a matter of urgency. Though we have different responsibilities, and developed countries clearly have an obligation to take the lead, we all have a common duty to do more and act within our respective capabilities and in accordance with our national circumstances.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development correctly reaffirmed sustainable development as a central element of the global action against poverty and the protection of the environment and identified important linkages between poverty, the environment and the use of natural resources. These linkages are real to billions of the poor; the combination of their empty stomachs, their degraded environment and their exploited natural resources, for which they benefit nothing, defines hopelessness and a heart-wrenching existence.

Many of these wretched of the Earth know from their bitter experience how their resource-rich areas were transformed into arid, uninhabitable and desolate areas forcing migration to better-endowed regions, thus exacerbating conflicts and the struggle for scarce resources.

Gathered here as representatives of the peoples of the world, we know very well that climate change, poverty and underdevelopment are not acts of God but human-made.

Clearly, the starting point for a future climate regime must be equity. A core balance between sustainable development and climate imperatives will have to be the basis of any agreement on a strengthened climate regime. Any deal on fair use of the ecological space will have to be balanced by a deal giving all countries a fair chance in the development space.

Under the aegis of the United Nations, but also within our regional bodies, we have adopted many programmes and declarations, with clear implementation targets aimed at addressing the challenges of climate change, poverty and underdevelopment. As this conclave knows very well, the many lofty agreements include, among others, those adopted at the Rio Earth Summit, the Copenhagen Social Summit, the Millennium Summit, the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development. At all these summits and others, we have adopted declarations using moving and solemn words that express our profound understanding of the gravity of the challenges facing the modern world and have unequivocally committed ourselves to defeating any and all of the miserable and dehumanizing conditions facing large parts of humanity.

Indeed, this collective asserted, in paragraph 11 of the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2):

> "We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty. ... We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want."

Yet the poor, whose hopes have been raised many times as we have made declaration after declaration against poverty and underdevelopment — and as we are doing now on climate change — can be forgiven for thinking that this important global leadership often sounds like an empty vessel.

That this collective is able to express, always eloquently, the dire circumstances characterizing poverty is without doubt. However, this Organization, which should pride itself on visible actions and results in the fight against climate change and poverty, finds it difficult to demonstrate decisive progress in that regard. The reasons for that are not hard to find. Although the concepts of freedom, justice and equality are universal and fully embraced by the United Nations, this global Organization has not itself transformed and designed necessary institutions of governance that are consistent with the noble ideals that drive modern democratic societies.

Because the nations of the world are defined by the dominant and the dominated, the dominant have always become the decision-makers in the important global forums, including at this seat of global governance. Accordingly, the skewed distribution of world power — political, economic, military,

technological and social — replicates itself in multilateral institutions, much to the disadvantage of the majority of the poor people of the world.

Indeed, even as we agree on the important programmes that should bring a better life to the billions of poor, the rich and the powerful have consistently sought to ensure that, whatever happens, the existing power relations are not altered and therefore that the status quo remains. The results of that situation are that the United Nations can and does correctly identify problems and appropriate solutions necessary for making the world a better place for all of humanity. Naturally, the dominant and the powerful very often respond positively to agreed programmes if these would advance their own narrow interests.

At the same time, the poor will continue to strive for improvement of their wretched conditions. They therefore see the United Nations as a natural instrument for helping to accelerate the process of change for the better. Hence, they correctly see implementation of all United Nations programmes as being central to the efforts relating to climate change and the struggle against poverty and underdevelopment.

Yet the cold reality is that it will be difficult for the United Nations, in its present form, to fully implement its own decisions and therefore to help the poor to swiftly achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Indeed, until the ideals of freedom, justice and equality characterize this premier world body itself, the dominant will forever dictate to the dominated, and the interests of the dominated — which are those of the majority of humanity — will be deferred in perpetuity. Thus, noble statements will continue to be uttered on all matters facing the majority of the people of the world, such as the need to successfully conclude the Doha Development Round, while little is done to implement the many critical agreements necessary to pull the poor out of the morass of poverty and underdevelopment.

We in my own country are of the firm belief that we will achieve the MDGs. Having emerged from more than three centuries of colonialism and apartheid, we inherited two interlinked economies, which we characterize as the first and second economies. The two economies — one developed and globally connected and the other localized and informal — display many features of a global system of apartheid. As South Africans, we have sought to strengthen the first economy and to use it as a base for the transfer of resources to strengthen and modernize the second economy, and thus embark on the process of changing the lives of those who subsist in the second economy.

Indeed, without the requisite resource transfers, it will not be possible to achieve the MDGs, because our second economy cannot on its own generate the resources needed to bring a better life to millions of poor South Africans. I mention this because, as we all accept, central to the global attainment of the MDGs is the critical matter of resource transfers from the rich countries of the North to the poor countries of the South.

Many developing countries — especially those of my own continent, Africa — do not have the material base from which to address and attain the MDGs on their own. Accordingly, there is an urgent need for massive resource transfers through development assistance, investment, trade, technology transfers and human resource development to these poor countries if we are to achieve the MDGs and successfully adapt to the devastating impacts of climate change.

If we do not succeed in building a climate change regime that balances adaptation and mitigation, underpinned by the transfer of technology and financial resources, we will place an unmanageable burden on future generations. In that regard, given Africa's specific and dire challenges, we believe it is important to enter into a partnership with Africa using the African Union's programme the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which the Assembly has adopted, so that the measures that the continent has undertaken, with limited resources, for the regeneration of all the African countries can be strengthened by support from the international community, guided by the programmes of the United Nations.

As history teaches us, it was because of the massive resource transfers in the aftermath of the Second World War that Western Europe recovered and was set on its development path. A similar intervention helped to put a number of Asian countries on their own development trajectory. The question we should ask is, why is there an absence of the same resolve to assist poor nations today? The global village to which we constantly refer should encourage us to expand human solidarity. Thus, we would build a durable bridge over the river dividing our common global village and

regrettably ensuring that one human being lives a fulfilling life while another experiences a miserable existence.

Representing the citizens of the world, we have set for ourselves programmes requiring that all of us work together to create better living conditions for humanity and ensure that we achieve that which is necessary for our mutual prosperity.

Together, rich and poor, developed and developing, North and South, we can and must truly hold hands and address the challenges of climate change and sustainable development, work together to defeat poverty and underdevelopment and ensure that every human being is saved from the indecencies and humiliations that are inseparable from poverty. But to do that, we need first and foremost to implement the decisions that we have adopted freely in this eminent house of the representatives of the global community. And so, let our actions speak louder than our words.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of South Africa for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Thabo Mbeki, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Néstor Carlos Kirchner, President of the Argentine Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Argentine Republic.

Mr. Néstor Carlos Kirchner, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Néstor Carlos Kirchner, President of the Argentine Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kirchner (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to express my sincerest congratulations to Mr. Srgjan Kerim on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. Argentina welcomes the new Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and expresses its support for his efforts at the head of the United Nations.

As in previous years, we have come to the General Assembly with the aim of revitalizing this world body and with the firm belief that this will ensure the effectiveness of international law in settling disputes, thus successfully dealing with any threats to peace.

The world is facing problems. The only hope we have of resolving them lies in respect for multilateralism, support for local customs, observance of international norms and conventions by all countries, and, of course, the full realization of human rights.

For each individual country, and for the world as a whole, peace will be possible only if we promote equality and work to combat poverty and marginalization. The world cannot and must not be a place where violations of human rights are everywhere. Peaceful coexistence is strengthened and maintained through true solidarity between nations based upon a concept of humanity that goes beyond the purely military or the predominantly unilateral.

Our international policy is based on the values of representative democracy, sovereignty of the people, respect for fundamental human rights, and the active upholding of international peace and security. Those principles are shared by the vast majority of the Argentine people. They help to focus the Government's activities and are reflected in the decisions taken by the Argentine Republic at the international level.

We firmly support the construction of more just and equitable societies that distribute more equitably the benefits of economic growth. We know that each country must have the right to seek out its own development model, without external pressure.

The past few years have been very testing for us. Considerable efforts have been made to rescue a nation that barely five years ago was in the throes of an unprecedented social and economic crisis. At the time, many people thought that recovery might be impossible. But day by day, with a great deal of effort and humility, we revived production in a country burdened by a foreign debt that threatened our future with its conditions and constraints.

Argentina — a developing country which once demonstrated that it is truly possible to climb the social

ladder; a country of immigrants where workers once succeeded in sending their children to university; a country once without illiteracy and having almost banished child mortality — had been reduced to a country of workers demoralized by unemployment, children begging in the streets instead of going to school, and the elderly living off miniscule pensions and becoming dependent on their children and grandchildren.

Our country's coffers had been emptied owing to the rigid application of the rules of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). As a corollary, there was violence in the streets, and Argentina experienced an institutional crisis, with presidents lasting only days. For the first time, Argentina sent off its own children into an unprecedented economic exile.

Today the Argentine State has won its autonomy and itself administers the variables of its macroeconomy as best it can in the current international environment. It pursues a sound, disciplined and predictable economic policy within a stable and democratic framework.

Our capacity for revitalization has allowed us, even without receiving funding, to begin cancelling our net debt with international organizations. We have even paid off in advance all of our debt with the IMF — an IMF that supported and promoted Governments that were self-supporting, adjusting and patching up their budgets, but at the cost of increasing the poverty of their people, promoting deindustrialization and irresponsibly plunging the country into debt.

Faced with the incredulous criticism of the promoters of orthodox prescriptions, Argentina, thanks to cautious monetary policies, disciplined public expenditures and a healthy budget surplus that enabled it to face or mitigate potential foreign crises, has reduced the debt and registered an annual growth rate of 9 per cent during the past five years. This was the strongest uninterrupted economic expansion of any in the past 100 years.

Today we represent the empirical proof that there is life after the Fund and also the certitude that other paths can lead to development and integration. We serve as a reminder of the unreliability of models that claim to be universally valid and the revindication of the right of countries to choose their own path, benefiting from international experience while prioritizing their national interests and circumstances above any other interest. Our case provides proof that the international economic architecture must be reformed, in particular that of IMF. The Fund is an exponent of an old world order that is no longer valid. Our case demonstrates the need for change in the multilateral financial institutions so that they can cooperate in the development of the less-well-endowed nations and help to fight poverty and generate true options for progress.

We are thinking, not of economic growth as defined by economic experts or historians, but of growth that has a strong social component and an emphasis on equity, where citizens are the focus of the results. Whereas one fourth of the labour force experienced the humiliation of being unemployed, unemployment has been reduced to 7.8 per cent since we have taken office. We are speaking, not about just any sort of work, but about appropriate and decent work of the kind we advocated at the most recent summit meeting of the Americas, which was held in our country.

Thanks to a productive policy that generates added value and, in addition, appeals to private enterprises to show social responsibility, we are reindustrializing Argentina. The economic indicators posted by our country today would have been impossible were it not for the complementarity of action between the State and the private sector.

Our sales to all destinations have doubled over the past four years, with a 16 per cent annual growth rate. Investments have improved substantially: gross domestic fixed investment has increased for the past 17 consecutive quarters; the ratio of investment to GDP is between 20 and 23 per cent — in stark contrast to the level of 2002 when it was hardly more than 11 per cent.

When faced with that crisis almost five years ago, we felt compelled to maintain essential assistance policies for the most vulnerable segments of our population. We do not regret those policies, and today we can state that the true solution to the serious social problems affecting our country, and many others around the world, lies in providing jobs, health care and education.

In the area of health, Argentina has launched a national policy that includes prescriptions for generic drugs and the provision of essential medications free of charge. It also strengthens maternity and child

programmes and everything that relates to primary health care, in line with the goals of equity and protection. This has enabled us to compensate in part for the disastrous state of the public health sector a short time ago.

Of course, education is an essential element for renewing the social and moral fabric of the nation, even though the time horizon for its effects to be felt is longer than those of other public policies. In order to remedy the tragic situation that signalled the breakdown of society and the failure on the part of the State to protect those who were most vulnerable, a new law on national education was passed. It will again focus on ensuring equality of opportunity through guaranteed access to a quality education throughout the territory that is linked to the labour market and includes excellent training for teachers. Under the new law, a deadline of 2010 has been set, by which time 6 per cent of the gross national product will be used to finance education.

In this context of steady recovery, Argentina's foreign policy is being strengthened and expanded, with a clear and decisive commitment to the national interest. Regional integration is a priority. Over the past two decades, through the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR), Argentina has strengthened its commercial ties with the countries of the region. But its trade relations go far beyond the region. In that sense, multilateral negotiations within the World Trade Organization are of particular importance because the liberalization of our agricultural sector — in which our country has clear competitive advantages — depends on them, as does the adequate flexibility we need to carry out our industrial policies.

More equitable and fairer rules in international trade are of great importance to Argentina. We therefore participate actively in multilateral economic negotiations with the firm goal of achieving equity in the norms that govern world trade and of reversing the discrimination erected against our main products through tariff barriers and other trade-distorting instruments imposed by the developed countries.

Argentina will be present in all multilateral forums, where we will participate to ensure more equitable and democratic rules. Multilateralism is the most effective instrument for winning the battle against hunger, poverty, exclusion and environmental degradation.

Everything I have said here is both cause and consequence of institutional stability and respect for the rule of law. The three pillars of the Argentine State are making decisions to combat impunity and preserve memory, truth, and justice. We have begun bringing to justice those guilty of serious human rights violators. Those who imagined themselves having escaped with impunity are fiercely resisting justice and, in an attempt to intimidate witnesses, have caused the disappearance of one witness, Julio Lopez. They have thereby sent a dark message to a society that is seeking the truth about the crimes against humanity which they committed, and that condemns such acts.

Unconditional respect for human rights is our new national paradigm. In the past, we were known throughout the world for violations of those rights; today, as we strive to find the truth and to punish the guilty, we also seek to defend those rights worldwide.

Argentina, the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo in the monumental dignity of their struggle, and the Argentine people have personally suffered under the inefficiency of a broken multilateral human rights system. Their sole comfort were the very precious humanitarian gestures of individuals, organizations and countries. While people were being kidnapped, tortured and killed in my country, the mechanisms established precisely to condemn and prevent such horrors remained silent. It is in their memory, so that this will never happen again, that we support the new Human Rights Council and hope that it will live up to the expectations of the international community.

My Government has endorsed instruments of great importance, including the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, adopted by this Assembly on 20 December 2006, which we signed in Paris on 6 February. That instrument, along with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, gives continuity and concrete form to a policy that ascribes a central role to the promotion of human rights.

In our public policy, we now focus on environmental protection, but we know that there will be no viable solution without cooperation among all the countries of the world, the industrialized countries

in particular, because the nature of the problem is of a global scale.

The issue of climate change should be of concern to all Governments, because no corner of the planet is unaffected by changes that have been identified as due to human activity. The Secretary-General's convening of yesterday's High-level Meeting was a timely manifestation of the urgent need to strengthen international cooperation as an effective and adequate response to protect the environment and prevent the unacceptable exportation of pollutants to the developing countries.

One after the other, various diplomatic efforts to halt the violence in the Middle East once and for all have failed, but we cannot merely throw up our hands. No military solution will lead to peace and the tranquillity that all the peoples of the region so desperately call for. The invasion of Iraq, which we rejected at the time it occurred, is the tragic and painful proof of the truth of our position. The Security Council and the nations of the Quartet have the heavy responsibility of accompanying and, if possible, guiding a peace process that can succeed with courage and great perseverance.

The Argentine Republic continues, year after year, tirelessly to condemn the serious threat of terrorism throughout the world. We believe that all acts of terror are criminal and unjustifiable and that no argument can justify them. Just as no nation of the world is beyond their reach, the response must be a joint effort of all nations, and especially this Organization, to stop and eliminate this scourge. We cannot tolerate the actions of those responsible for terrorism or of those who defend, finance or protect terrorists, be they individuals or countries.

Argentina has twice suffered terrorist attacks. The Israeli embassy was attacked in 1992 and the AMIA headquarters in 1994. Some 102 members of our community, some of whose relatives are here with us today, lost their lives. Those victims, united by terror to those of this city, those of Madrid, those of London, those of Bali, those of Istanbul and those of many other places, impose upon us the moral mandate to respect their memories and to commit all our energies to hunting down, finding and prosecuting those responsible.

Despite the difficulties that have arisen through the passage of time, given that those attacks took place 13 and 15 years ago, respectively, and the subsequent cover-ups, our interest and the justice system continue to seek the truth, and we keep our memory of the horror alive so that it will not recur.

In November last year, the Argentine justice system called for international cooperation in the apprehension of nine people suspected of having initiated and planned the 18 July 1994 attack on AMIA, and the Executive Committee of INTERPOL unanimously recommended the apprehension of six Iranian citizens and one Lebanese involved in the affair. We call here for that recommendation to be ratified during the November session of the INTERPOL General Assembly.

In that context, we hope that the Islamic Republic of Iran, in the context of applicable international law, will accept and respect Argentina's legal jurisdiction and cooperate effectively with Argentine judges to bring to justice those involved in these events. In that respect, I wish to say here, at United Nations Headquarters and before all the countries of the world, that, unfortunately, the Islamic Republic of Iran has to date failed to offer the required cooperation with the Argentine justice system to resolve those issues.

We call on the Secretary-General and on all the nations of the world to persuade the Islamic Republic of Iran to allow the judicial process to move forward. We do so with the sole aim of clarifying the facts and bringing those responsible to justice. Respect for the memory of our 102 victims requires justice to be carried out. We request the Islamic Republic of Iran to cooperate in the implementation of the norms of international law to allow us to come to nothing more, but nothing less than the truth.

Nations big and small, rich and poor, all throughout the world will be highly vulnerable if we fail to grasp that action against terrorism requires urgent multilateral, intelligent and sustained action firmly anchored in legitimacy, respect for individual rights, proportional response and respect for international public opinion.

Efforts to counter the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction can count on the firm support and full participation of the Argentine Republic.

My country is known for the active role it plays in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. Argentina develops, consumes and exports nuclear energy for

peaceful purposes in the framework of the strictest respect for the norms enshrined in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the non-proliferation regime in its broadest sense.

Efforts to prevent proliferation are ethically and legally correlated to progress on disarmament. Indeed, the legal instruments on which the prohibition of weapons of mass destruction is based specifically on the firm commitment not to develop new weapons of terror and destruction in the understanding that those who possess such weapons will proceed to their gradual and effective elimination.

In recent years, we have seen disarmament commitments permanently eroded. Nuclear arsenals remain disproportionately large and nuclear disarmament agreements are in stasis. It should come as no surprise, then, that, given the situation, there are those who question the legitimacy of pursuing unilateral advocacy for non-proliferation while solemn commitments in the area of disarmament are ignored.

Conventional weapons are responsible for the deaths of millions of people around the world. Our country has given a high priority to initiatives associated with the conclusion of an arms trade treaty. Domestically, we have initiated programmes for the voluntary handover of firearms, the initial results of which have been encouraging.

The reform of the Security Council is still pending. We are hoping for a reform that will make this central body more responsible, democratically representative and dynamic. It will not, however, achieve this objective by creating new privileged categories. We trust that the ongoing process of consultations will be successful so that the Council can be adapted to today's world.

Before concluding I wish to raise a matter of continuing importance to the Argentine Republic: the question of the Malvinas Islands, which include South Georgia, South Sandwich and the maritime areas surrounding those islands. This year, 174 years will have passed since the British began to occupy this part of Argentine national territory. Ever since that act of force in 1833, my country has protested against this illegal occupation and has demanded that the full exercise of its sovereignty be restored.

We would also mention that 2007 marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 1982 conflict in the South Atlantic, a conflict unleashed by the military dictatorship without the backing of the Argentine people, who had always endeavoured to find a peaceful solution to its legitimate sovereignty claim.

The General Assembly has dealt with this matter on many occasions, both prior to and since 1982. Starting in 1965, when the Assembly adopted resolution 2065 (XX), the Organization has recognized, year after year, the existence of a sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom relating to the question of the Malvinas Islands. It urged the two Governments to negotiate, as soon as possible, a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the dispute, taking into account the relevant resolutions of United Nations bodies and the interests of the people of the islands. The ongoing and unrenounceable objective of regaining the full exercise of Argentine sovereignty over this part of our territory and the permanent readiness of my country to resume negotiations aimed at finding a solution to the dispute have been reflected in our national Constitution.

It is incomprehensible to us that the United Kingdom should be unwilling to negotiate this matter, thereby violating the provisions of General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX) and numerous similar resolutions.

The time has come for the United Kingdom to shoulder its responsibility and put an end to an anachronism: the illegal occupation for clearly colonial purposes of territory belonging to another State.

My Government vigorously rejects the British claim on the establishment of maritime areas surrounding the archipelagos. In particular, it rejects the recently divulged intention of the United Kingdom to make a submission to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf — established by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea — relative to the outer limits of the continental shelf of these Argentine territories.

In this, my last message to the General Assembly as the President of the people of Argentina, I wish to reaffirm our profound conviction that it is only through democracy, accompanied by freedom, social justice and peace, that man can realize his full potential. This Assembly of the peoples has a bounden duty to help ensure that that will come to pass.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Argentine Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Néstor Carlos Kirchner, President of the Argentine Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ahmadinejad (*spoke in Farsi; English text provided by the delegation*): I am pleased and grateful to the Almighty to have the opportunity once again to attend this important universal forum.

In the present tumultuous world, loud outcries, threats and tensions predominate. The big Powers are unable to solve present problems, and mistrust in regional and international arenas is on the rise. The psychological security of societies is targeted by an onslaught of political and propaganda designs; disappointment prevails with regard to the efficacy of the policies and actions of the international organizations in the establishment of durable peace and security, and the protection of human rights is being weakened. I plan to touch upon and explain the roots of and solutions to these predicaments and some of the principal challenges facing our world. I will also speak to you about the need to remedy the present situation, about prospects for a brighter and a more hopeful future and about the appearance of the sublime, about beauty, compassion and generosity, about justice and the blossoming of all God-given human talents and about the prominence of faith in God and the realization of the promise of God. I will then submit for your judgement the question of Iran's nuclear programme as a yardstick for the measurement of honesty, efficacy, steadfastness and accomplishment. In the closing part of my statement, I will offer my proposals.

As you are all aware, mankind is currently facing important, numerous and diverse challenges. I will refer to some of them.

First, organized attempts to destroy the institution of family and to weaken the status of women. Family is the most sacred and valuable human institution. It is the centre of the purest mutual love and affection between mothers, fathers and children, provides a safe environment for the nurturing of human generations and serves as a fertile ground for the blossoming of talent and compassion. This institution has been respected in all times by all peoples, religions and cultures. Today we are witnessing an organized attack by the enemies and plunderers of humanity, who are trying to destroy this noble institution by promoting lewdness and violence and by crossing the boundaries of chastity and decency.

Womanhood, as the manifestation of divine beauty and supreme kindness, affection and purity, has been heavily exploited in recent decades by the holders of power and the owners of media and wealth. In some societies, womanhood has been reduced to a mere instrument of publicity, and all the boundaries and protective shields of chastity, purity and beauty have been trampled. That is a colossal betrayal of human society and of future generations, and it is an irreparable blow to the pillar of social coherence, the family.

I now turn to the issues of widespread violations of human rights, terrorism and occupation. Unfortunately, human rights are being extensively violated by certain Powers — especially those who pretend to be their exclusive advocates. Setting up secret prisons, abducting persons, carrying out trials and secret punishments without any regard for due process, conducting extensive tapping of telephone conversations, intercepting private mail and issuing frequent summonses to appear at police and security centres have become commonplace and prevalent. These Powers prosecute scientists and historians for stating their opinions on important global issues.

They use various pretexts to occupy sovereign States and cause insecurity and division, and then use the prevailing situation as an excuse to continue their

occupation. For more than 60 years, Palestine, as compensation for the loss that it incurred during the war in Europe, has been under the occupation of the illegal Zionist regime. The Palestinian people have been displaced, are under heavy military pressure or economic siege or are incarcerated under abhorrent conditions. The occupiers are protected and praised, while the innocent Palestinians are subjected to political, military and propaganda onslaughts. The people of Palestine are deprived of water, electricity and medicine for the sin of asking for freedom, and the Government that was freely elected by the people is targeted. Terrorists are being organized to attack the lives and property of people with the blessings of the politicians and military officials of the great Powers.

The brutal Zionists carry out targeted assassinations of Palestinians in their homes and cities, and terrorists are decorated with medals of peace and receive support from the great Powers. On the other hand, they attract a number of Jews from various parts of the world by using false propaganda and by promising to provide them with welfare, jobs and food, and then settle them in the occupied territories, exposing them to the harshest restrictions, psychological pressures and constant threats. They prevent these people from returning to their homelands and, by coercion and propaganda, incite them to malevolence towards the indigenous Palestinian people.

Iraq was occupied under the pretext of overthrowing a dictator and the existence of weapons of mass destruction. The Iraqi dictator, who had been supported by the same occupiers, was disposed of, and no weapons of mass destruction were discovered, but the occupation continues under different pretexts. No day passes by without people being killed, wounded or displaced, and the occupiers not only refuse to be accountable for and ashamed of their military adventure, but speak in a report of a new market for their armaments as a result of it. They even oppose the Constitution, the National Assembly and the Government established by the vote of the people, while not even having the courage to declare their defeat and to leave Iraq.

Unfortunately, we are witnessing the bitter truth that some Powers do not value any nation or human being and that the only things that matter to them are themselves and their political parties and groups. In their view, human rights amount to profits for their companies and their friends. The rights and the dignity of American people are also being sacrificed for the selfish desires of those holding power.

I shall now discuss aggressions against indigenous cultures and national values. Culture is the manifestation of identity, the key to the survival of nations and the foundation for their interaction with others. In an organized movement, indigenous cultures that are messengers of monotheism, love and fraternity are being subjected to broad and destructive aggressions. National customs and values are being humiliated, and the self-esteem and character of nations are being ridiculed and defamed. The purpose is to promote blind emulation, consumerism, scepticism towards God and human values and the plundering of the peoples' wealth by great Powers.

With regard to poverty, illiteracy, health-care issues and the gap between the rich and the poor, I should like to say that, while a major part of the natural environment in Asia, Africa and Latin America is being plundered by the political and economic domination of certain Powers, the situation of poverty and deprivation is alarming.

Let me draw the attention of the Assembly to some data issued by the United Nations. Every day, nearly 800 million people go to bed hungry and about 980 million suffer from absolute poverty, having less than a dollar a day in purchasing power. People in 31 countries — equivalent to 9 per cent of the world's population — have an average life expectancy of 46 years, which is 32 years fewer than the average in developed countries. The gap between the rich and the poor in some parts of the world has increased by 40 times. In many countries, the majority of the people are deprived of access to education and schooling. In developing countries, the rate of maternal mortality during pregnancy is 450 per 100,000; that figure is 7 in the richer nations. The infant mortality rate is 59 per 1,000 live births for the developing countries and 6 for the richer nations. One third of the deaths throughout the world — or 50,000 deaths daily — result from poverty. I believe that those data clearly demonstrate the tragic situation dominating economic interactions in the world.

Next, I shall take up the forsaking of noble values and the promotion of deception and lies. Some Powers sacrifice all human values, including honesty, purity and trust, for the advancement of their goals. They

propagate scepticism and deception in the relations between States and peoples. They lie openly, level baseless charges against others, act in contradiction to legal norms and damage the atmosphere of trust and friendship. In their relations with others, they openly abandon morality and noble values, forsaking justice, respect for others, love, affection and honesty for selfishness, supremacy, enmity and imposition. They sacrifice all the good things of life, including the sublime, for their own greed.

I now turn to violations of rules of international law and disrespect for commitments. Some, who themselves have drafted international law, openly and easily violate it and apply discriminatory policies and double standards to others. Having drafted disarmament regulations, they daily test and stockpile new generations of lethal weapons. Having helped to frame the Charter of the United Nations, they show disrespect for the right of sovereign nations to self-determination and independence. They conveniently abrogate their formal treaties and do not yield to laws concerning protection of the environment. Most of the violations of international obligations are committed by a few global Powers.

I will now talk about an escalation of threats and the arms race. Some Powers, whenever their logic fails, simply use the language of threats. The huge arms race casts its menacing shadow over the entire globe. The nations of Europe were the victims of two world wars and a number of other devastating conflicts and were subjected to the consequences of the cold war for many decades. Today, Europeans are living under threat and their interests, security and lands are endangered because of the arms race carried on by certain big Powers.

A bullying Power arrogates to itself the right to set up a missile system, poisons the life of the peoples of a continent and lays the ground for an arms race. Some rulers who superficially appear to be powerful actually believe that the tools they have at hand can be used at any time and for any purpose and, consequently, threaten others and cast the shadow of insecurity over nations and regions.

International organizations and mechanisms clearly lack the capacity to overcome problems and challenges, to put in place fair and just relations and peace, fraternity and security. There is hardly a Government or nation that really trusts these mechanisms to secure its rights or defend its independence, territorial integrity and national interests.

There are many more challenges besides the ones I have enumerated. I know that I could have introduced more had I wanted to touch upon them, but I chose to confine myself to the ones I have stated. Now, the important and decisive question concerns the roots and causes of these challenges. A scientific and careful analysis shows that two fundamental factors account for the present situation. Without a doubt, the first factor is the relations arising from the consequences of the Second World War. The victors of the war drew the road map for global domination and formulated their policies on the basis not of justice but of safeguarding the interests of the victors over the vanquished nations. Therefore, for 60 years now, mechanisms arising from this approach and related policies have been incapable of finding just solutions for global problems. Some big Powers still behave like the victors of the World War and regard other States and nations, even those that had nothing to do with the war, as the vanquished. They humiliate other nations and make extortionate demands. Their condescending ways are reminiscent of medieval times and the old lord-serf relationship. They believe that they should have more rights than others and that they are not accountable to any international organization.

Unfortunately, among all the ineffective bodies, the United Nations Security Council ranks first; owing to circumstances in which some Powers with an exclusive and special right to the veto in the Security Council act as prosecutor, judge and executioner. It is natural that countries that have been subjected to those Powers' infringements of their rights have no hope of getting what they deserve from the Council.

Regrettably, humanity has witnessed that in all long wars — like the Korean and Viet Nam wars, the war of the Zionists against the Palestinians and against Lebanon, the war of Saddam against the people of Iran and the ethnic wars of Europe and Africa — one Security Council member was one of the belligerents or supported one party, usually the aggressor, against the other, or the conflict itself.

Let us take a look at Iraq. They first occupied the country and then received authorization from the Security Council — the same Council in which the same occupiers have the right of veto. Whom should

the people of Iraq complain about, and where should they take their complaints, in the hope of securing their rights?

We saw in Lebanon that some Powers, for 33 long days, prevented the Security Council from taking any action against the Zionist regime with the hope of giving it time to achieve victory. Then, when they became disappointed at seeing their hopes unfulfilled, they decided to put an end to the hostilities by adopting a resolution. But the duty of the Security Council is to prevent the expansion of conflicts, to put ceasefires in place and to promote peace and security. To whom and to what organization should the people of Lebanon complain?

The presence of some monopolistic Powers has prevented the Security Council from performing its main duty, which is the maintenance of international peace and security based on justice. The credibility of the Council has been tarnished, and its efficacy in defending the rights of United Nations Member States has been undermined. Many nations have lost their confidence in the Council. Some other mechanisms, such as monetary and banking ones, are in the same undesirable situation and have been turned into tools that enable some Powers to impose their will on other nations. It is evident that these mechanisms are not capable of responding to current needs, solving challenges or establishing fair and sustainable relations.

Again, there is no doubt that the second and more important factor is that some big Powers disregard morals, divine values, the teachings of the prophets and the will of the Almighty. They allow the rule of the incompetent. How can the incompetent, who cannot even manage themselves and conduct their own affairs, govern humanity and arrange its affairs? Unfortunately, these people have put themselves in the position of God. They are in servitude to their own whims, and they desire to have everything for themselves. For them, human dignity and the lives, property and territories of others are no longer respected. For centuries, humanity has had a deep wound inflicted on its tired body by impious Powers. Today, the problems that people around the world face are mainly rooted in disregard for human values and ethics, as well as in the rule of the selfish and the incompetent.

The only sustainable approach to the betterment of humankind is a return to the teachings of the divine prophets, monotheism, respect for the dignity of humans and the flow of love and affection in all relationships, ties and regulations, and the reform of present structures on this basis. To fulfil this objective, I invite everybody to form a front of fraternity, amity and sustainable peace, based on monotheism and justice, under the name of the Coalition for Peace, to prevent incursions and arrogance and to promote the culture of affection and justice. I hereby announce that, with the help of all independent, justice-seeking and peace-loving nations, the Islamic Republic of Iran will be heading down this path.

Monotheism, justice and compassion for humans should predominate in all the pillars of the United Nations, and this Organization should be a forum for justice, where every member should enjoy equal spiritual and legal support. The General Assembly, representing the international community, should be considered the most important pillar of the United Nations and should, free from any pressure or threats by big Powers, take the required measures for the reform of the other United Nations structures including especially the reform of the Security Council. It should define new structures based on justice and democracy, with a view to becoming responsive to present requirements and settling existing challenges, thereby bringing about enduring stability and security.

The nuclear issue of Iran is a clear example of how such mechanisms perform and of the prevailing thoughts behind them. Members are all aware that Iran is a member of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and has always observed its rules and regulations. It has had the most extensive cooperation with that Agency in all areas. All our nuclear activities have been completely peaceful and transparent.

According to the Statute of the IAEA, every member has a number of rights and obligations. In fact, all members have to stay on a peaceful path and, under the supervision of the Agency, assist other members, and they are entitled to be supported by the Agency and have access to the fuel cycle with the help of the Agency and its members.

Thus far, Iran has fulfilled all of its obligations but has been deprived of other members' technical assistance and, even at times, of the Agency's support. For about five years, some of the aforementioned Powers have, by exerting heavy pressure on the IAEA, attempted to prevent the Iranian nation from exercising

its rights. They have derailed Iran's nuclear issue from its legal tracks, and have politicized the atmosphere to impose their wishes through taking advantage of all their potential.

The Government of Iran spared no effort to build confidence, but they were not satisfied with anything short of the complete halt of all activities, even those related to research and university fields. They only sought to deprive the Iranian people of all their inalienable rights, even to the extent that centres not involved in the fuel cycle or not in need of supervision by the Agency were closed.

After three years of negotiations and attempts to build confidence, the Iranian nation came to the firm belief that the main concern of these Powers is not the possible deviation of Iran's nuclear activities, but is to prevent its scientific progress under that pretext. If this trend continues, there will be no possibility for Iran to enjoy its rights, not even in the next 20 years. Therefore, Iran decided to pursue the issue through its appropriate legal path, one that runs through the IAEA, and to disregard unlawful and political impositions by the arrogant Powers.

In the past two years, abusing the Security Council, the arrogant Powers have repeatedly accused Iran and have even made military threats and imposed illegal sanctions against it. However, by the grace of faith in God and national unity, Iran has moved forward step by step, and now our country is recognized as one with the capacity for industrial-scale fuel cycle production for peaceful uses. Unfortunately, the Security Council, in dealing with this obvious legal issue, was influenced by some bullying Powers and failed to uphold justice and protect the rights of the Iranian people.

Fortunately, the IAEA has recently tried to regain its legal role as supporter of the rights of its members while supervising nuclear activities. We see this as a correct approach adopted by the Agency. Previously, they illegally insisted on politicizing the Iranian nation's nuclear case, but today, because of the resistance of the Iranian nation, the issue is back with the Agency, and I officially announce that, in our opinion, the nuclear issue of Iran is now closed and has turned into an ordinary Agency matter. Today, many important questions have been raised about the nuclear activities of certain Powers within the IAEA, which should be dealt with properly. Of course, Iran has always been, and will be, prepared to have constructive talks with all parties.

I would like to thank all the nations and countries that, during this difficult period, defended the legal rights of my nation and motherland. I also want to express our appreciation to the members of the Non-Aligned Movement, our friends in the Security Council and in the IAEA Board of Governors, the committed and law-abiding experts of the Agency and its Director General for standing by the law. I would also like to announce that, unlike the monopolistic Powers, the Iranian nation is ready to offer to other members its experiences in the form of educational programmes, based on its obligations under the Agency's Statute and under Agency supervision.

Now I would like to address those who have shown hostility towards the Iranian nation for some five years and who have offended and accused my people, who have contributed to the history and civilization of the world. I advise them to learn from history and their recent actions. They badly mistreated the great Iranian nation, but they should be careful not to inflict the same on other members of international organizations, and not to sacrifice the dignity of international organizations for the sake of their unlawful wishes. Today the nations of the world are wide awake and resistant. If those Powers reform themselves, the whole world will be reformed. Nations are inherently good and can coexist peacefully.

Those Powers should endeavour to serve their own peoples; others do not need them. Is it not high time for these Powers to return from the path of arrogance and obedience to Satan to the path of faith in God? Would they not like to be cleansed of their impurities, submit to the will of God and believe in him? Faith in God means believing in honesty, purity, justice and compassion for others. They can be certain that they will benefit from purity, honesty, justice and loving and respecting human dignity. They can also be certain that such values are, more and more, considered appropriate, valuable and beautiful by the nations of the world.

This is the invitation of all the divine prophets from Adam to Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ and Mohammed, peace be upon him. If they accept this invitation, they will be saved, and if they do not, the same calamities that befell the people of the distant past will befall them as well. According to the holy

Quran: "One who does not answer the divine call should not think that he has weakened God on Earth; he has no companion but God and he is clearly engulfed by darkness". They have nothing of their own and cannot escape from the dominion of the rule of God and his will.

At this important gathering, I have to remind them of the following words of the Almighty, which are mentioned in the Holy Quran:

> "Do they not look at the powers and Governments which came before them? If the people of the past had actually possessed something, they would have kept it and would not have let you possess it now. God destroyed them because of their sins, and nobody could protect them against the will of God".

These Powers have to know that thoughts and methods based on oppression and injustice are doomed to failure. Do they not see the signs of vigilance and resistance based on monotheism, philanthropy and the justice-seeking spirit of the nations of the world? Do they not notice that we are nearing the sunset of the time of empires? I hope that this invitation will have a practical answer.

Peoples and Governments are not obliged to obey the injustice of certain Powers. Those Powers, for the reasons already mentioned, have lost the competence to lead the world. I officially declare that the age of relations arising from the Second World War and of materialistic thought based on arrogance and domination is well over now. Humanity has passed a perilous precipice and the age of monotheism, purity, affinity, respect for others, justice and true peace-loving has commenced.

It is the divine promise that the truth will be victorious and the Earth will be inherited by the righteous. Those who are free, believers and the people of the world should put their trust in God. Those who crave lofty values, wherever they are, should try to prepare the grounds for the fulfilment of that great divine promise by serving the people and seeking justice.

The era of darkness will end, prisoners will return home, the occupied lands will be freed, Palestine and Iraq will be liberated from the domination of the occupiers, and the peoples of America and Europe will be free of the pressures exerted by the Zionists. Tenderhearted and humanity-loving Governments will replace the aggressive and domineering. Human dignity will be regained. The pleasing aroma of justice will permeate the world and people will live together in a brotherly and affectionate manner.

Striving in that way to surrender rule to the righteous and perfect human, the promised one, is indeed the final cure for the wounds of humanity, the solution of all problems, and the establishment of love, beauty, justice and a dignified life throughout the world. That belief and endeavour is the key to unity and constructive interaction among nations, countries, the people of the world and all true justice-seekers. Without a doubt, the promised one who is the ultimate saviour, along with Jesus Christ and other holy prophets, will come. In the company of all believers, justice-seekers and benefactors, he will establish a bright future and fill the world with justice and beauty. That is the promise of God; therefore it will be fulfilled. Let us play a part in the fulfilment of all that glory and beauty.

I wish for a bright future for all human beings, the dawn of the liberation of and freedom for all humans, the rule of love and affection all around the world, as well as the elimination of oppression, hatred and violence — a wish that I expect to be fulfilled in the near future.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of the Republic of Indonesia

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Indonesia.

Mr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of the Republic of Indonesia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of the

Republic of Indonesia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Yudhoyono: Let me begin by stating how much I welcome and support the theme of this year's sixty-second session of the General Assembly, which is "Responding to climate change".

I stand here representing the good people of Indonesia, who are very eager to welcome representatives to the Bali conference in December this year. When they come to our country, they will see a great nation whose multi-ethnic and multi-religious people live in harmony with one another and in harmony with mother Earth, the way they have for thousands of years.

Indonesia is a country that has felt and suffered the effects of climate change. In recent years, we have been hit by a series of natural disasters in the form of floods, drought, forest fires, El Niño, tsunamis and earthquakes. The issue of climate change has made us see interdependence in a completely new light. When it comes to global warming, we are much more interdependent than we thought in terms of the causes, symptoms and solutions.

We must uphold the principle of common and differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, but there is always room for every country, every community and every individual to be more flexible, more innovative and more inclusive.

A persistent theme in our discussions on climate change yesterday was the need for urgency, which means the need for action and the need to think outside the box. I count myself as an optimist who sees today a larger window of opportunity to strike a global consensus to tackle global warming.

We will have that chance in Bali. The Bali conference must yield a new road map on climate change, and that new road map must spell out what must be done by both the developed and the developing worlds to save humankind and its planet from the looming tragedy of climate change. It must link the solution to the problem of climate change with sustainable development — the conquest of poverty. It must produce an outcome and timeline that will be more comprehensive and more ambitious in achieving its practical objective of reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

We developing countries must protect our natural resources while using them wisely for development. Among the most valuable of our natural resources are our forests. From them, we extract economic wealth; through them, we store an immense volume of carbon that would otherwise pollute the atmosphere.

On that basis, yesterday Indonesia took the initiative of launching a special leaders' meeting of tropical rainforest countries. At that meeting, we leaders of the countries having custody of a great portion of the world's rainforests decided to intensify our cooperation in forest conservation and reforestation.

We also believe that countries that seek to enhance their carbon sinks — through forestation, afforestation and avoided deforestation — should be given incentives and rewarded fairly for doing so.

Throughout our deliberations on climate change, let us always keep an eye on the requirements of development. That means we must not lose sight of the imperative to conquer poverty as a basic problem of the human condition.

In Indonesia we have a national dream, which is reflected in our 1945 Constitution. We dream that we and our future generations can enjoy the blessings of peace, freedom, justice and prosperity. And we dream of seeing to it that the same blessings are enjoyed by the rest of humankind. Poverty can kill that dream.

That is why the new Indonesia of today is fully dedicated to the fight against poverty. For that purpose, our national economic policy is focused on the development of rural areas, where the vast majority of our people live and where they wage a daily struggle against the ravages of poverty. That is why we are so intent on making the national business climate friendly and attractive to foreign direct investment, so that jobs will be created for our millions of unemployed people. That is why we are so intent on eradicating the taint of corruption from our society. And that is why our foreign policy addresses the need for a truly functioning global partnership for development, because only such a partnership can ultimately conquer the basic problem of poverty.

Peace in the Middle East is crucial to long-term global stability. But there can be no peace in the Middle East unless there is justice, especially justice for the Palestinian people. A divided Palestinian nation

cannot secure justice. Hamas and Fatah must therefore engage in dialogue and reconcile their agendas. The Arab initiative must catalyse political change in the region.

Indonesia has a long history of participating in United Nations peacekeeping operations that dates back to the Suez conflict, in 1956. We are taking part in the operation in Lebanon today. We are determined to maintain that proud tradition of involvement in global concerns. That, I believe, is what humankind needs most today, namely, the involvement of everyone. There must be a global partnership at work. Developed and developing countries must work together with a greater sense of partnership and of urgency.

Therefore, to solve the problem of climate change the Bali Conference must set the stage for a genuine partnership between developed and developing countries and all other stakeholders. Developed countries must extend support while developing countries strive to protect and enhance their environment and its biodiversity. They must lighten the burden of developing countries in carrying out that immense task — through incentives and the transfer of environmentally sound technology.

While developing countries are in hot pursuit of their Millennium Development Goals, the developed world can greatly help ensure the success of the Doha Development Round. Developed countries must ensure sufficient flows of financing for development through foreign direct investment and official development assistance. They must facilitate the transfer of technology for development.

We in the developing world, on the other hand, must prudently manage our natural and human resources. We must practise good governance. We must fight corruption at all levels so that our resources will not be wasted. We must see to it that the human rights of our citizens are promoted and protected.

No partnership works without teamwork, and no teamwork is possible without constant effective communication. That means dialogue. After all, dialogue is the best way to exercise soft power. Dialogue and soft power can greatly advance the cause of disarmament and non-proliferation. Dialogue and soft power have helped resolve various intra-State conflicts — including in Aceh, where two years ago we reached a peaceful political settlement that permanently ended the conflict. Dialogue and soft power can also be a major instrument in addressing the root causes of terrorism.

That is why I am a firm advocate of dialogue among faiths, cultures and civilizations. I urge that the dialogue in the Alliance of Civilizations be fully integrated into the work of the United Nations. Sincere dialogue can lead to the formation of an effective global partnership on climate change, which is also a partnership for sustainable development. I look forward to such a dialogue taking place at the Bali Conference this coming December. That will be a vitally important dialogue, for it can set off a chain of events that will lead to the fulfilment of the dream of billions for a safer, better life. It will certainly add sheen to the national dream of Indonesia — our common dream — for a better world of peace, social justice and equitably shared prosperity.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Indonesia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, President of the Republic of Indonesia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Panama.

Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Torrijos (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of my country, and on my own behalf, I would like to congratulate Mr. Kerim on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at the sixty-second session. I should also like to commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his encouraging message this morning (see A/62/PV.4).

The Charter of the United Nations has been the subject of revisions almost from the moment it entered into force. Some of those changes were successful and timely. However, today we are acting too slowly in adapting United Nations structures to the realities of the twenty-first century, despite the fact that the Millennium Development Goals have given it new vigour and almost a new raison d'être. Although there seems to be broad agreement to strengthen the General Assembly and to make the Security Council more representative and transparent, we are spending too much time trying to decide how to do it.

Panama has been very clear in its support for the aspirations of Brazil, Japan and Germany to become permanent members of the Security Council. But we have also deemed it appropriate to offer Member States alternatives that would enable us to make progress in this debate. We urge an open mind so that we can complete this debate and come up with the relevant changes quickly.

Panama became a Security Council member with a great feeling of regional solidarity and fiduciary responsibility vis-à-vis the international community on all matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security. We are grateful for the confidence that the General Assembly placed in my country, and we are always ready to seek agreement between parties to a conflict and to help remove obstacles that stand in the way of peace and agreements. To that end, we have encouraged and supported efforts to advance democratic institutions and the rule of law, the promotion and protection of human rights and humanitarian assistance to refugees and displaced persons.

No conflict in the world has been given greater attention by the international community than that in the Middle East region. Although agreements have been arrived at that have eased tensions, the path towards peace has always been elusive, and new obstacles arise all the time. The conflict between Israel and Palestine is at the very core of the problems in the region. Panama therefore encourages and promotes negotiations between the parties, geared towards creating a Palestinian State that can live in peace with the State of Israel, with secure borders for both. This will require a cessation of attacks on Israel from Gaza, withdrawal from all the occupied territories in the West Bank and the achievement of an agreement about the status of Jerusalem that would satisfy the parties directly involved and the entire international community.

On the situation in Lebanon, it is important for the international community to realize that a lasting peace in the region requires the establishment of a government of unity which can end the current political deadlock. If it is not resolved, this could lead to a return to civil war, which is something that we all thought was now over and done with.

From this rostrum, we join in the call for an immediate reduction in tension and peaceful solutions in all parts of the world where international peace and security are threatened. It is much less costly to invest our efforts in avoiding confrontation than to stop it once it has begun. Accordingly, we appeal to this Organization to reconsider its actions vis-à-vis the conflict in the Middle East which, far from being resolved, seems to be intensifying.

Turning to the dispute between Serbia and the Kosovar Albanians, today we can be cautiously optimistic that, after several months of Security Council debate, which included a visit to the region, the parties have agreed to resume dialogue. Only an agreement between them can ensure peace and economic development in the region.

Panama strongly supports the renewal and extension of the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti. We recognize the progress made by the Haitian Government with support from that mission. However, there are many matters that still require more efforts, and it is essential that the mandate not end before that country's institutions have been strengthened.

We welcome the progress made, but we must condemn the violation of human rights in Myanmar and the continued detention of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. Although every conflict has its own particular causes, we can say that violations of the human rights of certain groups, a culture of impunity or the absence of strong institutions able to guarantee the human rights of all are the common denominator of most conflicts.

In Africa, there are examples of how institutional weakness and abuses of human rights become the main causes of conflict. On the initiative of the President of France, the Security Council is meeting this very afternoon to analyse all the problems that afflict that

continent (see S/PV.5749). It is only by strengthening institutional capacity and building a culture of justice that it will be possible to restore to those peoples the rights that this Organization enshrined for all inhabitants of the Earth.

Responsibility for solving disputes and preventing conflict lies primarily with the States parties to a dispute. However, achieving peace depends to a large extent on our commitment to the collective security architecture that we have built here in the United Nations. Since the end of the cold war, the United Nations has responded to the major challenges to international peace and security by increasing the number and the quality of peacekeeping operations in cases where diplomacy has failed. To avoid a return to conflict situations, peacekeeping operations cannot be confined to simply separating rival forces. It is essential to strengthen the concept of integrated missions to include new responsibilities that cover a broader range of activities. Achieving a lasting peace means more than simply laying down one's weapons. One must set off on the path towards development; legal and political institutions must be rebuilt and human rights must be respected.

We cannot talk about lasting peace while we live under the threat of terrorism, whose definitive defeat is an ongoing challenge for the international community. Panama supports United Nations efforts to combat this scourge in an integrated manner, such as the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (see resolution 60/288). And, because we attach high priority to the adoption of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism, we have shouldered the responsibility of chairing the Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee.

The adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (see resolution 61/106) was a major milestone on the path towards a world without exclusionism and reaffirmed the universality of human rights. Specific measures have been defined to guarantee full participation. Above all, we have categorically said that discrimination against any person on the basis of disability is a violation of the inherent dignity and worth of the human person. I would like to say that Panama has made significant progress in this area; inclusive education is a State priority. We have signed the Convention, and we are committed to implementing it.

Of particular importance to Panama is the recent adoption of a declaration on indigenous peoples for the Latin American region. It strengthens respect for cultural diversity, with emphasis on preserving cultural assets.

The President returned to the Chair.

A year ago, I told the General Assembly (see A/61/PV.12) that my country would hold a referendum to decide whether to undertake the work of widening the Panama Canal so that larger ships could transit between the two great oceans. As I believe is generally known, the people of Panama approved the project, and barely three weeks ago the work began. It will be completed by the year 2014.

Panama, which has always contributed to the development of international trade and to understanding among nations, is especially pleased to reaffirm that unifying mission today, as well as its commitment to peace, development and full respect for human rights.

I should like to conclude my statement by referring to some words spoken from this same rostrum by a Panamanian more than 50 years ago and that are still just as true today. He said that to attempt to preserve peace without at the same time improving peoples' living conditions is to leave the task unfinished and inconclusive. We should not tire of repeating that the most serious threats to peace and freedom are rooted in human poverty, social injustice, ignorance and economic backwardness; and that the only peace worth keeping and defending, and which can be lasting, is peace with honour, justice and freedom.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Panama for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Martín Torrijos, President of the Republic of Panama, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, and to invite him to address the General Assembly.

President Karzai: Over the 62 years of its existence, the General Assembly has witnessed many moments of historical reckoning. It was one such moment, five years ago, when Afghanistan returned to the Assembly as a country emerging out of a long, dark era of war, violence and terror. As I stood before the Assembly in September 2002, the challenges of restoring security to the lives of the Afghan people and of rebuilding Afghanistan into a stable and democratic country seemed all but insuperable. The fate of a nation swayed between the promise of a safer and more prosperous future, on the one hand, and the enormity of the tasks, on the other hand.

Today, efforts in support of stability and reconstruction in Afghanistan are proceeding resolutely apace. The Afghan people continue to make the best of the new opportunities. Our economy is surging ahead. The legitimacy of our newly founded institutions is gradually taking root. Our society is brimming with freedom and activity.

For too long, Afghanistan was in an unenviable position in terms of most human development indicators. That situation is no longer acceptable, and is changing rapidly. Today more Afghans enjoy access to health and education than ever before in our history. We have very fortunately cut our child mortality rate, which was one of the highest in the world just two years ago, by 25 per cent. As a result, over 85,000 more children have a chance to live today.

For the first time in 40 years, Afghanistan is set once again to become self-sufficient in food production. Already, the fruits of relative stability and increased prosperity in Afghanistan are spilling over the borders to the wider region. Having enjoyed unprecedented growth in our regional trade over the past six years, we are now moving to consolidate Afghanistan's role in the economic integration of the region. Earlier this year, we assumed membership of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The significance of that step lies in the potential for Afghanistan to connect South Asia to Central Asia and the Middle East in commerce and interaction.

Last month, President Rahmon of Tajikistan and I were joined by the United States Secretary of Commerce to inaugurate a transit bridge financed by the United States that connects Afghanistan with Tajikistan and beyond. That bridge, alongside many other infrastructure projects we have completed, is to play a significant role in the further economic integration of the region.

Make no mistake: despite our achievements, a safer and brighter future for Afghanistan still hinges on many serious challenges. Poverty, underdevelopment, climatic hardships and, above all, the menaces of terrorism and narcotics, are challenges of global proportions that continue to be shared by Afghanistan as a member of the global village.

To the extent that terrorism remains a threat, world citizens will never be safe. Six years after Afghanistan's liberation from the grip of international terrorists, we are still grappling with this threat on a daily basis. Terrorists continue to kill innocent people, including those who have come from the outside world to help. The past two years have witnessed a significant increase in terrorist attacks carried out with new and brutal tactics such as beheadings, kidnappings and the burning of schools and clinics.

Terrorism can only be overcome if it is addressed appropriately across its regional and international dimensions. We are monitoring with deep concern the continued presence of a terrorist infrastructure in our region, and condemn, in equally strong terms, the atrocities that terrorists are committing in places beyond our borders.

Recognizing that constructive regional cooperation is vital to a successful counterterrorism strategy, we proposed the holding of a joint *jirga*, or council, between Afghanistan and Pakistan. We are pleased with the support that that initiative has received from our friends in the international community. The first joint peace council between Afghanistan and Pakistan was held in Kabul last month. It was a promising step in harnessing the unequivocal support of civil societies in both countries in our common fight against terrorism and extremism. We expect that the outcome of the council will translate into concrete action.

While we continue our struggle against terrorism, we will also focus on reconciliation with those that are not part of Al Qaida and other terrorist networks.

I also note, with deep concern, the particularly heinous use by terrorists of local populations as human shields, resulting in the loss of civilian lives. While condemning such deliberate targeting of civilians in the strongest possible terms, I would like to emphasize the need for maximum caution on the part of the international forces operating in Afghanistan, as well as for increased coordination with Afghan authorities, in order to avoid civilian casualties.

Narcotics is another global peril that, like terrorism, seriously undermines the stability and well-being of our societies. In Afghanistan, that scourge is the legacy of the decades of misfortunes that befell our country — from the widespread despair induced by war and oppression, to drought and climatic hardships. We are working with our international partners to tackle the menace. We will prioritize the provision of alternative livelihoods to farmers and expedite implementation of other strategies, including poppy eradication and the interdiction of traffickers. However, addressing the world's drug challenge must involve focus on the far greater dimensions of the drug trade that lie outside Afghanistan, such as fighting the international drug mafia, ensuring stricter border control, and reducing demand in foreign markets.

Climate change has rightly been recognized as a serious challenge facing the entire world. No country, developed or developing, is immune to its impact. Yesterday's high-level event on that important topic was an essential step forward in strengthening the resolve of the international community to address that global threat with unity. We fully support the recommendations of the Chairman's summary.

We are also watching the situation in the Middle East with deep concern. In particular, we remain concerned about the situation in Palestine and call for the full realization of the rights of our Palestinian brothers and sisters, including their right to an independent State, living side by side with its neighbours in peace and coexistence.

The adoption of the Iraq Compact, sponsored by the United Nations and the international community, was an achievement marking Iraq's new partnership with the international community to consolidate peace and promote social and economic development. We, the Afghan people, wish our brothers and sisters in Iraq every success in achieving their aspiration of a peaceful and prosperous Iraq.

Allow me to thank our partners in the international community, the United States, Japan, members of NATO, the European Union, our brothers in the Islamic world, our neighbours, China, India, Australia and all other countries for supporting Afghanistan during these years of challenge to our country. We appreciate the role that the United Nations and the Secretary-General are playing in coordinating the international community's role in the development process in Afghanistan. I am particularly thankful to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his initiative, two days ago, of calling a high-level international meeting on Afghanistan, at which our partners once again reaffirmed their commitment to Afghanistan's rebuilding and reconstruction.

Six years ago, in an unprecedented convergence of interests, the international community united behind Afghanistan, facing up to the inescapable reality that the world's security had come to depend on stability and progress in Afghanistan. Today, many of the nations represented here can rightly take pride in what we have achieved together. I thank them all for their commitment and for the steadfast support they have provided to Afghanistan over the past six years. Without that support, the progress we have made in Afghanistan would be simply unthinkable.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hâmid Karzai, President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ivan Gašparovič, President of the Slovak Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Slovak Republic.

Mr. Ivan Gašparovič, President of the Slovak Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ivan Gašparovič, President

of the Slovak Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Gašparovič (*spoke in Slovakian; English text provided by the delegation*): Allow me, Sir, to congratulate you on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I believe that, under your presidency, this Organization will make further progress in its reforms, enabling it to respond promptly to the challenges faced by the international community.

From the outset, I would like to thank your predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, for her efforts in performing the challenging tasks on the agenda of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly.

The Slovak Republic fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Portugal on behalf of the European Union. In addition, I wish to make a contribution to the general debate on behalf of the Slovak Republic.

In spite of notable progress in some areas, the Slovak Republic is not satisfied with the current pace and scope of the United Nations reform process. We think it necessary to make the work of newly created structures and institutions more dynamic and to prepare the United Nations to ensure the targeted prevention and solution of concrete problems and conflicts.

We appreciate the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission. We hope that it will become a pivotal tool in post-conflict stabilization. It should give the international community a vehicle for solving issues that extends the scope of crisis management.

Slovakia also encourages efforts towards overall reform in the system of human rights protection. We have welcomed the commencement of work by the Human Rights Council and recognize its primary responsibility for promoting universal respect for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Within the ongoing process of institutional changes, we expect the Council to effectively enforce its mandate pursuant to resolution 60/251. The Slovak Republic endorses the concept of protecting and promoting human rights at the national and international levels. In that context, we are prepared to assume our share of responsibility. We will be honoured to receive the support of other United Nations Member States for the candidacy of the Slovak Republic to the Human Rights Council for 2008-2011 in the election scheduled for spring 2008.

The Slovak Republic appreciates the measures designed to reform the Secretariat. We support the modernization of the Secretariat's management system so that it can flexibly respond to current needs and challenges, and the strengthening of its accountability for the implementation of its tasks. As a country participating in several United Nations-led peacekeeping missions, we have also expressed our support for the restructuring of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

United Nations reform cannot be complete without also reforming the structure and working methods of the Security Council. Slovakia has been actively engaged in this reform effort during the term as a non-permanent member of the Security Council. The membership of that United Nations body should reflect the changed geopolitical reality. The number of both permanent and non-permanent Council members should increase and the Global South countries should acquire more seats. Germany and Japan have our explicit support in their ambition to become new permanent members of the Council. As a small country, we also support those proposals for the non-permanent membership category that would restrict countries from so-called "flip-flopping" between categories.

Nor may the General Assembly evade the reform effort. It is necessary to strengthen its role and authority by focusing the Assembly's attention on real and acute problems of the current world. The Assembly should also create mechanisms that would allow for the monitoring of the implementation of its decisions and at the same time provide for the elimination of outdated measures that overburden its work.

Thought should also be given to the representativeness of the bodies established by the General Assembly. Slovakia, as a member of the Group of Eastern European States, appreciates the election of Mr. Srgjan Kerim as President of the Assembly at its sixty-second session. At the same time, it should be emphasized that the Eastern European Group is the most dynamically growing regional group in the General Assembly, yet its representation in managerial positions in the Secretariat and in United Nations bodies does not reflect that situation. A prime example of the situation is the fact that this year not one of the

Assembly's Vice-Presidents is from the regional group of which the Slovak Republic is a member.

Besides the efforts aimed at reforming the United Nations, the Slovak Republic wishes to pay special attention to the issue of security sector reform during the sixty-second session. We believe that insufficient reform or lack of reform in the security sector is often a source or catalyst of conflicts, or even causes post-conflict countries to lapse back to a conflict state. It should also be borne in mind that a well-governed security sector should, above all, ensure human security, which represents the foundation for the stability, good governance and, ultimately, development of a country.

We are expecting a comprehensive report by the Secretary-General on security sector reform, which should become the basis of a more in-depth discussion on this issue within the United Nations. Therefore, Slovakia has decided to initiate a thematic discussion on security sector reform during the sixty-second session.

The Slovak Republic also expects the sixty-second session to revitalize the discussion on disarmament and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Slovakia has had an opportunity to contribute to these efforts through its chairmanship of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004). In this context, in February 2007 Slovakia also initiated an open debate in the Security Council on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The destructive potential of weapons of mass destruction increases along with the growing threat of international terrorism. We therefore also wish to pay special attention to this threat to international peace and security. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy adopted by the General Assembly last year (resolution 60/288) provided for wide-ranging international cooperation in this field.

The Slovak Republic pays due attention to the economic and social aspects of the United Nations, where we wish to engage even more actively. In 2003, we submitted our candidacy for membership in the Economic and Social Council for the years 2010 to 2012. We will be pleased to receive support from other Member States for our candidacy.

As a new development aid donor, we want to facilitate more effective cooperation with both beneficiary and donor countries, integrate the work of international agencies and make more efficient use of the existing United Nations capacities in this area. We wish to pay special attention to the development of post-conflict regions, which currently receive the largest portion of development aid. We believe that there will be room in the Economic and Social Council for Slovakia to utilize its experience in the field of security sector reform in the joint work with other bodies of the United Nations system.

Over the past two years, Slovakia has worked for the first time as a member of the Security Council. When adopting our decisions on the sensitive problems of the modern world, we took into consideration the peculiarities of individual cases, yet at the same time, we sought to promote the value system of a member of the European and trans-Atlantic community. Slovakia will continue to work within the United Nations in this same spirit, even after the completion of its current term in the Security Council. We also wish to make good use of the experience we have gained in our work in other United Nations bodies.

The Slovak Republic is frustrated that no solution to the Kosovo issue has yet been found. In our opinion, Kosovo must not thwart the unification of European nations nor set a negative precedent in terms of international law.

It is with hope that we view the adoption of Security Council resolution 1769 (2007), granting a mandate for the deployment of a joint African Union-United Nations peacekeeping operation in Darfur. This unprecedented decision has moved the cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations to a new level.

With regard to the Middle East issue, Slovakia endorses a peaceful, fair and permanent solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The talks should result in the establishment of a viable Palestinian State that will coexist with Israel in an atmosphere of perpetual peace and security. In this context, we appreciate the resumption of dialogue between Israel and Palestine and the measures taken in this respect by the Quartet.

It has been seven years since our Millennium session, when we discussed our vision for the future of life on our planet. It has been neither seven rich nor seven poor years. The United Nations has made some

progress. On the other hand, it has failed to cope with many challenges. We must do better together to make the future score fall more in favour of the United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Slovak Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ivan Gašparovič, President of the Slovak Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will hear an address by His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco.

His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Prince Albert (*spoke in French*): Allow me, at the outset, to address my warmest congratulations to the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. With that election, which honours your country, the Group of Eastern European States and the members of this Assembly have unanimously recognized, Sir, your eminent competence and your perfect knowledge of the Organization. You and the other members of the Bureau may be assured of the active cooperation of my delegation.

You have chosen the theme of climate change for this sixty-second session. I would like to thank you for that initiative, which has been commended by all.

Today, I would like to share my observations on this issue as well as my personal commitment in service of this cause. Very early on, I learned to appreciate nature and to take the necessary measures to protect it. From my very earliest years, I was taught to share and to give back. Then I wanted to see and learn things for myself, and my responsibility today is to testify and to act.

That is why, in June 2006, I decided to make my own contribution, as well as that of the Principality, by creating a Foundation. The mission of the Prince Albert II Foundation is to identify priority and symbolic projects and to accelerate their implementation in order to reach concrete results throughout the world aimed at a sustainable and equitable management of natural resources.

The Foundation's activities are based on three strategic principles. The first is to act alongside nations, international institutions and opinion leaders in order to enhance consciousness of and accelerate decisions for sustainable development. I am personally committed to leading consciousness-raising missions on the ground around the world. I will also stand with other heads of States, as I do today, and take part in international negotiation meetings regarding the environment.

The second objective of my Foundation is to promote initiatives, activities and corporate actions that combine innovation with environmental protection. The Foundation in supporting and financing about 30 projects as of this year. Through its activities, the Foundation also wishes to attest to the fact that it is possible to engage in sustainable practices and behaviour that are respectful of the environment and compatible with economic, social and human development.

Lastly, its third objective is to create the broadest possible public understanding of the environmental challenges and responsibilities involved in those issues via outreach activities. I commit myself to devoting the time and energy necessary to the success of those actions.

All the programmes adopted by the Foundation comply with the environmental policy of my country. Monaco has long been active in protecting the marine environment and in developing scientific research in marine biology. The creation a century ago of the Oceanographic Museum and the Museum of Prehistoric Anthropology by my great-great-grandfather Albert I, and the more recent creation of an underwater reserve by my father, Prince Rainier III, bear witness to that policy. The RAMOGE Agreements for the control of marine pollution and the Agreement on the Conservation of Cetaceans in the Black Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and contiguous Atlantic Area reinforced that international engagement. That vocation is part of the history of my country.

This year, I agreed to sponsor an ambitious international initiative launched by the United Nations Environment Programme, the objective of which is to provide for the planting of at least 1 billion trees throughout the world in 2007. Seven months after the launch of the operation, that objective was achieved. It is an extraordinary sign of hope, and I must commend the dynamism of the Programme, whose actions within the United Nations are essential for the environment.

The time for action is today. We already know that the future of humanity is at stake. This is a collective responsibility. To tackle this urgent matter, it is necessary to raise awareness, mobilize capacities and revolutionize our lifestyle. That is how we will forge a new relationship to nature. As Yves Coppens, a French scientist, stresses: "for millennia, climate has dictated man's behaviour; today, it is man who dictates his behaviour on nature".

It is also necessary to commit ourselves to promoting a new ethic — that of the right to the protection of the environment. What better place is there than this prestigious institution to lead the way forward? That new ethical dimension can be achieved only if built on the sincere commitment of each individual. That is why Bill Clinton, in his recent book, calls for concrete mobilization. As he says so well, "each one of us can give something. There is so much to do; it is never too late to start". Like President Clinton, I believe that generosity is at the heart of that mobilization.

It is thus imperative to transcend our own selfishness and inertia, and to learn to develop a harmonious relationship between humankind and nature. Safeguarding our planet is the challenge of the twenty-first century. That challenge requires courage, tenacity, commitment and generosity. Above all, let us act. Peter Frumhoff, one of the main contributors to the report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, declared, following a large-scale study undertaken by the Union of Concerned Scientists, that "some changes are inevitable, but the worst consequences can be avoided if we act quickly". That message was reiterated over and over again yesterday during the high-level event on climate change convened by the Secretary-General.

The European Union has shown the way by committing to a 50 per cent reduction of its greenhouse gases by 2050. Let us help developing countries by finding new financial resources; let us quickly update our modes of production and consumption. To meet that challenge, we must work together to find solutions to existing problems. Individual announcements or actions will never solve the problem. The threat is global. As the climatologist Edouard Bard has pointed out, "global warming concerns our entire ecosystem and the consequences of this phenomenon can be done only at the global level".

We have long lived in a world fraught with threats, but for the first time we are facing a planetary threat that threatens humankind itself. The evolution of human mindsets and behaviour will inevitably take time, but the planet cannot wait. Thus, without further delay, we must adopt a culture of responsibility. We must meet this historic challenge so that we may preserve planet Earth for our children. Let us make the choice of hope based on humanistic values, and let us not forget the power of courage when it is supported by the will to place humankind at the core of our priorities.

There are also ethical considerations which inspire my country's constant and resolute commitment in the fight against terrorism. In no circumstances can violence ever be a legitimate means to pursue any combat, whatever the cause may be.

To consolidate its legal framework in compliance with international standards, and according to the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF), the Principality of Monaco took measures identical to the European Union directives adopted to fight money laundering and terrorism. Without waiting for the new report of the Select Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures, in this area, my Government enacted new laws and regulations on these issues. With those tireless efforts, Monaco has been publicly recognized for leading the way in this field. I will maintain the required vigilance so that our legislative framework and our security policy will continue to guarantee the reputation of the Principality as a safe State. In so doing, I reiterate my unfaltering determination to combat the manifestations of terrorism regardless of their forms.

For my country, sustainable development and the fight against poverty go hand in hand, in that we are called upon to identify a new manner of growth more respectful of the resources of our planet, which, while

abundant, are not inexhaustible. That is the reason why I asked my Government to increase by 30 per cent for the year 2008, under the heading of international cooperation, the total of the Principality's voluntary contributions to the funds and programmes of the United Nations. This significant increase of funding for official development assistance is proof my country's determination to eventually reach the target of devoting 0.7 per cent of gross national income to official development assistance. A great deal remains to be done in the fields of education, access to health care, the fight against pandemics and HIV/AIDS, human crises following natural disasters or conflicts and, lastly, the fight against poverty.

I pay particular attention to the Principality's actions through multilateral and bilateral assistance programmes, supplemented by the generous initiatives of the charitable organizations in Monaco, which are also part of my country's tradition.

Children's welfare has, for a long time, been a priority commitment for the Principality. My sister, Her Royal Highness the Princess of Hanover, is actively involved with this issue through the World Association of Children's Friends (AMADE Mondiale). In December, the General Assembly will hold a debate to evaluate progress in the implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action entitled "A world fit for children" (resolution S-27/2), adopted in 2002. Considerable progress has been achieved in five years, although there still are too many needs to be met.

Monaco has also joined the campaign entitled "Unite for children. Unite against AIDS," sponsored by UNICEF, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Health Organization. My sister, Princess Stephanie, Special Representative of UNAIDS, has committed herself wholeheartedly to harnessing the energies of the Principality and beyond to advance in the fight against this scourge.

Reform of the Security Council remains a current issue. I reaffirm my country's support for a process of increasing the membership of this Council. In fact, the chances of maintaining international peace and security will be that much greater if the representation of the international community in the Security Council were the most equitable possible.

I also express the wish that the newly established Department of Field Support, working alongside the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, will facilitate the actions of United Nations personnel on the ground working valiantly to safeguard peace. I congratulate the Secretary-General on the efforts he has undertaken to these ends.

My country became a Member of the United Nations 14 years ago. Ever since, the Principality has increased its participation on the international scene. The Principality has taken pleasure in hosting many international meetings and high-level conferences in recent years.

Accordingly, I am delighted that in February 2008, the tenth special session of the Governing Council of United Nations Environment Programme and the Global Ministerial Environment Forum will be held in Monaco. On that occasion, I will proudly receive ministers of the environment of Member States to discuss topics similar to those we are tackling within the General Assembly framework and thus to continue the debate launched here. In so doing, my country will, I hope, contribute once again its part to the fundamental debates of our time and will reaffirm its will to be at the heart of the genuine struggle.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco for the statement he has just made.

His Serene Highness Prince Albert II of Monaco was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Estonia.

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ilves: I shall speak today on four fundamental topics: climate change, cybersecurity,

conflict resolution and cooperation among international organizations.

In accordance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as well as the Kyoto Protocol, industrialized countries are obligated to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases. Estonia has already achieved the basic target of the Kyoto Protocol: our emissions of greenhouse gases have been cut back by over 50 per cent. Fully subscribing to the European Union statement on the post-2012 vision for international climate, released by the Portuguese presidency, we hope that the negotiations concerning a new global climate deal will reach a new comprehensive and global political agreement by as early as December 2009.

Yes, we recognize that developing countries have special needs in the areas of sustainable economic growth and eradication of poverty. But we also need to decouple economic growth from energy consumption and carbon dioxide emissions. Investing in energy efficiency will have a huge impact on our future. Diversification of the energy supply and greater use of renewable energies are the way forward.

The resources and the technology for decarbonisation come primarily from industrial nations. Therefore, we need to continue the dialogue between industrialized and developing nations concerning the adoption of a "green" economy, reducing carbon-fuel dependency and counterbalancing climate change caused by human activities. We need to promote technology transfer, which is necessary for developing environment-friendly energy production. Estonia believes that the best way forward is to tie development assistance to investment in clean technologies.

If in the past people were connected by sea lanes and trade routes, today we are ever more connected by the Internet, along with the threats that loom in cyberspace. Cyberattacks are a clear example of contemporary asymmetrical threats to security. They make it possible, with limited means and from a distance, to paralyse a society.

In the future, cyberattacks may, in the hands of criminals or terrorists or terrorist States, become a considerably more widespread and dangerous weapon than they are at present. Cyberattacks are a threat not only to sophisticated information technology systems, but also to communities as a whole. For example, they could be used to paralyse a city's emergency medical services. The threats posed by cyberwarfare have often been underestimated, since, fortunately, they have not as yet resulted in the loss of any lives. Also, for security reasons, the details of cyberattacks are often not publicized.

In addition to taking concrete technical and legal measures to counter cyberattacks, Governments must morally define cyberviolence and cybercrime, which deserve to be generally condemned in the same way as terrorism and the trafficking in human beings are condemned. Fighting against cyberwarfare is in the interests of us all. It requires both appropriate domestic measures and international efforts.

In April and May of this year, my country, Estonia, coped successfully with an extensive cyberattack, and we are prepared to share with other countries the know-how that we have acquired. We call upon the international community to cooperate in legal matters in questions concerning cybersecurity. But, since this whole subject is in a relatively new field, it is essential to establish an appropriate legal space. As a first step, we call upon all countries to accede to the Convention on Cybercrime of the Council of Europe. The Convention is also open for accession by non-members of the Council.

We should move ahead and create a truly international framework for combating these vicious acts. The Global Cybersecurity Agenda of the International Telecommunications Union, launched by the Secretary-General in May, is an important initiative for building international cooperation in this field. Estonia also agrees with the assessment of the specialists of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research that a globally negotiated and comprehensive cyberspace law is essential and that the United Nations can provide the neutral and legitimate forum necessary for that task.

The United Nations is determined to resolve conflicts. Understandably, conflict prevention and resolution, particularly in Africa, is a top priority. We welcome the creation of a United Nations-African Union peacekeeping force to quell the violence and instability plaguing the Darfur region of the Sudan.

It is important to settle conflicts in other places as well, such as Afghanistan. We need to increase the presence and visibility of the United Nations there, which would be an encouraging sign for the local

population and would also send a signal to other international aid organizations and non-governmental organizations that they should increase their activities. The United Nations should also assume a greater role in coordinating the reconstruction effort in Afghanistan.

I would like to highlight one conflict in Europe in which the United Nations has a significant role to play: the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia. Along with the other "frozen" conflicts in the neighbouring region, it remains among the last unresolved conflicts in Europe. It is my hope that the Group of Friends of the Secretary-General will have the determination to find solutions that honour Georgia's territorial integrity. We cannot be satisfied with the current situation. It is important to build confidence between the parties and to resume the meetings between the representatives of Georgia's Government and those of Abkhazia. There is no place for military provocations, internal or external.

A major task for the United Nations remains the facilitation of the return of refugees to Abkhazia, which, unfortunately, has been greatly hampered. Progress regarding the conflict is possible if all interested parties act in a constructive way. We must generate the political will necessary to resolve the conflict. In that context, I welcome the increased contribution of the European Union (EU).

The international community should also secure the best and most rational use of available resources, including in emergency and crisis response situations. For example, both the United Nations and the EU were involved in managing the response to the Asian tsunami in 2004 and the Lebanese crisis in 2006. That once again brought to the fore the necessity of developing common needs assessments — to further discuss the roles and mandates of the relevant actors, such as the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the European Commission's Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and the Community Mechanism for Civil Protection of the EU.

Poverty, armed conflicts and natural disasters such as floods, tsunamis and forest fires are all causes of another global problem — forced migration, which should also be tackled in a more concerted manner by the whole international community. Being forced to leave one's home is always a tragedy. I know: my family was forced to leave my country, fleeing brutal Soviet occupation forces. Trying to integrate into a new society is always a significant challenge. Only through well-coordinated common efforts can we ensure that people never again have to leave their homes because they have no other option. Thus, a global approach to human migration should remain a vital issue on the United Nations agenda.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Estonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Excellency Mr. José Eduardo dos Santos, President of the Republic of Angola

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Angola.

Mr. José Eduardo dos Santos, President of the Republic of Angola, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. José Eduardo dos Santos, President of the Republic of Angola, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Dos Santos (*spoke in Portuguese; English text provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I would like to salute the international community, legitimately represented here today. I would also like to take this opportunity to personally congratulate Mr. Ban Ki-moon on his election to the post of Secretary-General of our Organization. I am confident, Sir, that your able leadership, steadfastness and commitment will assist us in our search for consensual solutions to the issues that affect humanity in order to make the world an increasingly safer, freer and fairer place.

Today, the world is confronted with global warming, a consequence of the atmospheric pollution resulting from human activity on Earth, which is causing dramatic and dangerous climate change. The world is also confronted with extremists who resort to terrorism and the use of religion for political ends; with growing militarism as a would-be response to terrorism; and with the hoarding of capital, information and know-how, all of which widen the gap between the

rich and the poor and generate social tensions around the world.

On the issue of terrorism, the model of an open, democratic and tolerant civilization, with a State that serves the interests of all, has shown that parties that alternate in political office in the post-cold-war period can coexist and fight for their principles and values through peaceful means. I believe that the same model can be successful if properly adjusted to the concrete realities of other regions.

At the same time, we must continue to deepen our study and analysis of the threat of terrorism and use peaceful means to seek an ever-broader consensus on the collective responses needed to counter it.

Islam can peacefully coexist in societies with other religious beliefs. However, it is necessary to neutralize fanaticism and prevent the Islamization of the State, which is contrary to humanity's modern legal concept of a secular State.

In our opinion, it is necessary to defend cultural diversity and to render more inclusive and fair the process of political, economic and social development; to support and stimulate, in countries that are predominantly Islamic, all the forces and movements that defend modern life and the separation of State from religion; and to support the values and privileges of the universal culture that are enshrined in conventions, charters and international treaties. This movement is immense, it continues to grow and it can be more effective than military action, which in our understanding should only constitute a last resort.

Ecumenism and dialogue among cultures are other avenues for action that can be better and more frequently used to bring together the dominant religions and all the people of the world, based on the ideals of peace, solidarity and fraternity.

The fight against poverty and hunger in the world, with a global plan monitored by the United Nations as an international convention, higher and fairer remuneration for commodities or natural resources extracted from developing countries and technical support to poor States would contribute greatly to eliminating social inequalities and the social seedbed and support of those who prefer violence.

In this regard, the globalization of the economy must be regulated in order to mitigate the asymmetries between the centre and the periphery of the economic system and to ensure that each person has the necessary means for survival with dignity.

Such regulation should further address environmental matters. There are countries that have experienced rapid industrial development without paying due attention to the protection of the environment. Other countries are now involved in an identical endeavour, thus increasing the production of carbon dioxide and worsening the greenhouse effect. It is plain that a new meeting of all world leaders is urgently required in order to approve and begin the execution of a global plan of environmental protection.

We therefore support the initiative of the Secretary-General to that end, convinced that the countries that most pollute the atmosphere, such as the richest countries, should contribute more resources to its protection.

Today, the Republic of Angola is in a position to engage more actively in this collective effort of solidarity for humanity, because the country has been at peace for a little more than five years and is moving towards complete normalization of its political, economic and social life. Proof of that lies in the fact that Angola has already signed all the international protocols in favour of environmental protection, such as the Kyoto and the Montreal Protocols, while contributing to conflict resolution and peace in its region and in the African continent as a whole.

As a country that has recently chaired the Peacebuilding Commission, we are pleased to learn of the important progress achieved in consolidating the peace processes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Serra Leone.

However, the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea and the conflict in Darfur, Sudan, still prevail, while the issue of Western Sahara's self-determination remains unresolved. I am convinced that the Organization will remain engaged in the search for a solution to these problems in the shortest time possible and that United Nations forces will be urgently deployed in Darfur.

The Commission of the Gulf of Guinea is currently headquartered in Luanda, where the representatives of the Zone of Peace and Cooperation of the South Atlantic met recently at the initiative of Angola. Both institutions promote peace, security,

stability and multiform cooperation among their members, in consonance with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

I must highlight the decisive role that regional and subregional organizations can play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts. At the same time, they can alert everyone to the need to strengthen the mandates and the financing of United Nations peacekeeping operations, without prejudice to post-conflict activities, such as disarmament and the resettlement of populations, among other actions.

In the particular case of Africa, it is in our interest to see the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) fully achieved, so that the growth rate of the entire continent can be aligned with that of the world economy. The reduction of extreme poverty by 50 per cent by 2015, as foreseen by the United Nations, must be accompanied by a decisive fight against hunger and disease, including HIV/AIDS and other endemic scourges. The effectiveness of these actions depends, however, on complementary achievements, such as fairer trade with developed countries, greater fluidity in the transfer of capital, official development assistance and forgiveness of foreign debt.

In recent years, significant progress has been made in the reform of the United Nations system. It is nevertheless important to continue to move forward in that process, especially in regard to the Security Council, with the objective of strengthening the authority and the effectiveness of the Organization and making it more representative, more democratic and more participatory in the areas of international security, development and human rights.

In spite of criticism and some known failures, the United Nations remains the only institution at the international level with the prestige and credibility to resolve inter-State conflicts and crises that, due to their dimensions, escape the control of the authorities of a State or endanger its population.

The United Nations-led fight against conventional, nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and landmines, in addition to the peacekeeping and humanitarian operations of the Blue Helmets in many regions, have contributed to greater world security. In that regard, it is important to strengthen the monitoring of the implementation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), so as to move towards a global disarmament process and discourage a new arms race. It is also urgent to relaunch the Middle East peace process in a committed and comprehensive manner, for the Middle East remains unstable and the source of a constant threat to world peace.

A recurring theme in the Assembly's agenda is the embargo against Cuba. It is imperative to put an end once and for all to the economic, trade and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America, as it violates the principles of international law and Chapters I and II of the United Nations Charter. Angola hopes that the United Nations will state its view on this matter and remain faithful to the core of its Charter, according to which all actions must be the result of a debate and a collective decision, thus excluding unilateralism.

The challenges that lie ahead of us entail a constructive dialogue among all the countries involved, especially among heads of State and Government, who will have to overcome possible differences and impediments and will have to find middle ground between the possible and the desirable, between boldness and realism.

We believe that through joint action, the promotion of dialogue among civilizations and the revitalization of the spirit of international solidarity, it will be possible to build a better world for all. A world of peace, based on justice and the rule of law, without weapons of war and without dangerous pollution is a safer world. Its construction depends entirely on the political will of all States Members of the United Nations, especially the permanent members of the Security Council. Let us all unite our forces for a better world for all.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Angola for the statement he has just made.

Mr. José Eduardo Santo, President of the Republic of Angola, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy.

Mr. Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Prodi (Italy) (*spoke in Italian; English text provided by the delegation*): I wish to offer you my heartfelt congratulations, Sir, on your election to preside over this sixty-second session of the General Assembly. Your experience in international affairs and your first-hand knowledge of the Organization make you particularly suitable for this important post. At the same time I sincerely thank your predecessor, Ms. Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, for her wise and dedicated leadership of the Assembly.

I want to begin my statement where I left off last year, with Italy's decision to defend human rights in the world and to oppose the death penalty. In recent months, Italy has worked very hard to enable the Assembly to adopt a resolution on a universal moratorium on the death penalty, with a view to its complete abolition. It has been a source of great satisfaction to see support for our initiative growing day by day in Europe and in every other region of the world. We have now reached a decisive moment.

I trust that we shall all be united in this battle, which is supported by Nobel laureates, statesmen and stateswomen, and free men and women throughout the world, and that the "growing trend in international law and national practice toward a phasing out of the death penalty" — to quote Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (*Press release SG/SM/10839*) — will be officially sanctioned by this General Assembly's adoption of the draft resolution we are about to submit together with many countries from every regional group and from the European Union. If genuine politics means showing foresight, we shall perform a great political act through the adoption of that draft resolution. It will demonstrate that humankind is capable of making progress not only in science, but also in the field of ethics.

A United Nations resolution against the death penalty will prove that human beings are better today than they were yesterday, even in moral terms. An outcome with enormous consequences, heralding a more just future, and a society that has at last freed itself from the spiral of revenge, demonstrating that it has heeded the ancient admonition: if you want peace, you must work for justice.

Last year we welcomed the ceasefire in Lebanon and the launch of the new United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which has been under Italian command for several months now. Today, thanks in part to our common commitment, Lebanon is in a better situation, although it has not yet solved its problems, as the brutal attacks of recent days have unfortunately demonstrated.

We must continue to support the Lebanese reconciliation process and help the country to regain its unity through the election of a new President. We must do this without ignoring the root causes of the conflicts afflicting the Middle East, first and foremost the Palestinian question. In short, we must continue to mobilize support for reconciliation among peoples and within a single people.

Restoring peace to the Middle East is the top priority of the international community, because if one day this region should find greater peace, freedom and prosperity, we shall all live in greater peace, freedom and prosperity. I am therefore delighted that the United States has promoted a new international meeting. We are ready to provide our input and we are already preparing it, knowing that the more countries in the region that are behind this meeting, the greater the possibility of success.

Italy will continue to play its part in the rest of the region too, beginning with dialogue. For it is through dialogue that the most difficult issues can be resolved. I have never seen a lasting solution to a problem when the solution was imposed from above or from outside.

Today's challenges, such as bringing peace to the Middle East, are complex. If we wish to overcome them we must rise to their dimensions. In other words, we have to set aside all partisan interests in a world that is increasingly shaped by global processes.

This applies also to climate change, to which this session is most appropriately dedicated. As I said yesterday at the panel convened by the Secretary-General, Italy considers climate change a priority issue. We are among the European supporters of a unilateral 20 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020. We have made similar commitments on energy efficiency, renewable energy sources and biofuels. In Europe we have already made various strategic decisions, but it is obvious that any post-Kyoto agreement can only be achieved within the United Nations, because when speaking about global warming we are speaking about the pre-eminent global problem of our day.

National approaches to solving the world's problems no longer exist. The era of making and unmaking national borders is long over. It is only through multilateralism, by marshalling everyone's energies, that we can hope to do good.

Our task today is to adapt the multilateral structures at our disposal to a changing world and to think of new forms of global governance, for there is no other way to manage global processes.

The challenge facing Europe today is not to become resigned to the world as it is, but to seek to improve it based on the values in which Europe believes: freedom, democracy, respect for others, and respect for the rules of peaceful coexistence. That is why we are adapting our founding treaties. That is why we are building a common foreign and defence policy. That is why we have invented a new citizenship, European citizenship, to which we are entitled by choosing to share certain values, not by virtue of kinship or nationality.

The European dream is thus the child of the universal dream of the United Nations. In the past year the United Nations has continued to play a central role in resolving international disputes. The cases of Lebanon and Darfur demonstrate that if Member States are willing to give the United Nations a strong central role, the Organization is today up to the task. We have to ask ourselves what the United Nations needs in order to fulfil its worldwide mission and to be equally effective in different crisis areas.

First and foremost, we need an Organization capable of renewal and adaptation. In the past two years the revival of the reform process produced its first positive results. One essential aspect of reform relates to the General Assembly, which remains the main decision-making organ of the Organization. I never tire of repeating that we have to restore the General Assembly's central position, and exploit its political guidance potential and, above all, its universality.

The principles of democracy and the representation of every Member State underpin the United Nations system. That is why we are opposed to any concept of Security Council reform that would establish new permanent members. The growing contribution of a growing number of countries to the Organization should not be wasted by introducing elitist and selective reforms.

It is clear that reforming the Security Council means addressing one of the fundamental pillars of the global security architecture. The Council's central role and its nature as the paramount source of international legitimacy impel us to seek shared political solutions.

Last year, in this very Hall, I advocated that negotiations be started to break the deadlock and help strengthen the Organization. I spoke of the need to start negotiations based not on imposing predefined models and positions, but rather on the search for solutions based on the widest possible consensus.

I am therefore delighted that, one year later, the General Assembly has decided to make every effort, through intergovernmental negotiations among others, to reach a general agreement on Security Council reform that we all hope will open a new chapter with a view to an agreed solution, a solution that I hope can include strengthening the presence of the leading regional stakeholders in the Security Council. My country is ready and will not fail to demonstrate commitment and to contribute ideas in this new phase of the Security Council reform process.

Reform is also intended to make the Organization more effective in the areas and on the issues where, by history and vocation, it can provide greater added value: Africa and development issues.

The United Nations is deeply engaged in Africa. Over two thirds of the Blue Helmets are deployed in Africa on peacekeeping missions. Italy will pursue this goal through the establishment of the African Peace Facility fund, which will complement its European counterpart fund. Darfur and Somalia remain two of our central concerns.

But it would be a mistake to look only at the negative side and forget the many encouraging signs of development and unity coming from Africa. I am referring to the growth of the economy and to the hope that has arisen in many parts of the continent.

In Europe we are now preparing for the second Africa-Europe Summit. I hope that it will be held successfully before the end of the year. Italy is working above all to ensure that the Summit will spark a European policy for Africa that is worthy of the name.

That brings me to development. It is the responsibility of the United Nations to keep development at the top of the international agenda. It will take more than lip service to the Millennium Development Goals to achieve them. We all have to work for their attainment. I have already expressed my willingness to sit at a table next year for a progress report on the implementation of the commitments we made seven years ago.

We can no longer ignore the reality around us: one half of world trade and investment benefits 14 per cent of the world's population; the 49 poorest countries in the world receive 0.5 per cent of the global product; and 90 per cent of the planet's wealth lies in the hands of only 1 per cent of its inhabitants. Efforts are needed from everyone, particularly those who have more to give. The G-8 can play an important role in this area. Here and now I pledge to make this issue the centrepiece of the Italian presidency in 2009.

The principles of solidarity and cooperation underlying this Organization are as sound today as they were 62 years ago. The spread of democratic values and greater attention to the protection of human rights should not make us forget that these principles and values are still threatened and violated in far too many parts of the world. What is more, insecurity leads more and more people and countries to close themselves off.

The danger is that this sense of insecurity can cause societies to regress. Even the most free and democratic nations, if they feel they are under threat, may adopt measures that will undermine peace and with it, the civil and political rights of their citizens.

In the face of such risks, the principles and values of the United Nations are our beacons and our stars. They make it possible for us to navigate even by night and in rough waters. Staying on course is not just a political imperative. It is above all a moral imperative for all of us.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy for the statement just made.

Mr. Romano Prodi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mrs. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mrs. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Mrs. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Mrs. Merkel (Germany) (*spoke in German; English text provided by the delegation*): Please accept my congratulations, Mr. President, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I wish you every success.

We are currently experiencing a period of dramatic changes. Great opportunities are accompanied by considerable risks. Global structures are changing. States, economies and societies are becoming networked as never before. That is what we call globalization.

The good thing about that development is that prosperity is increasing, and more and more people are escaping from poverty. The challenge that that development poses is that not everyone has their fair share of this prosperity. There are considerable imbalances. We thus need a global awareness, beyond national boundaries, of our joint responsibility in order to master the major challenges facing our world.

Climate change is undoubtedly one of the central challenges facing humanity today. I therefore very much welcome your decision, Mr. President, to make climate change the focus of this year's session of the General Assembly. Never before have the facts been so clear, the consensus among scientists so great or the need for action so indisputable. Each and every country

is affected by the impact of climate change. No one country can tackle it alone. Not to take action would incur immense costs and cause new global conflicts.

What does that mean for the way ahead? In quite concrete terms, it means that any contribution from individual States or groups of States is welcome. However, I would like to add most emphatically that such contributions can only complement a post-Kyoto agreement under the auspices of the United Nations. They can never replace it.

This session of the General Assembly therefore has to set the course for the next vital step: the climate conference in Bali. Environment ministers will have to agree in Bali on a clear road map so that negotiations can be successfully concluded by 2009. There are three key elements: a common understanding on the scale of emissions reduction, a common understanding on fair national contributions and a common understanding on the instruments we should use both to protect the climate and to foster economic growth.

The scope of the need for action is becoming increasingly clear. We must at least halve global emissions by the middle of the century. For this we have a clear guiding principle: the principle of common but differentiated responsibility. Industrialized countries must embrace ambitious absolute reduction targets. During the German presidency the European Union adopted bold targets for 2020. All industrialized countries will have to drastically reduce their per capita emissions.

Emerging economies will first of all have to decouple their economic growth from emissions. In the long term, per capita emissions in both industrialized countries and emerging economies will have to converge at a level compatible with our global climate protection target.

Such a process of long-term convergence offers all countries scope to develop. It does not demand too much of anyone. There is no doubt in my mind that only a United Nations agreement can provide the dependability this will require.

Climate protection will therefore be a litmus test of the international community's ability to act effectively in the twenty-first century. For, on our own continent, we Europeans know from our daily experience that — although any individual country is too small to make a real difference — together we can achieve much.

In the light of our experience, I believe three principles are of crucial importance to our common future. First, economic strength and social responsibility belong together. This principle applies both to how States treat their citizens and to how States treat each other. It emphasizes the right and freedom of each individual to achieve their full potential. At the same time, it upholds cohesion and solidarity, while categorically rejecting isolationism and protectionism.

That is why we are seeking a balanced and comprehensive agreement on multilateral trade. In concrete terms, this means that we have to bring the Doha Round to an early and successful conclusion. Too much time has been wasted. We have to seize the last chance for negotiations this autumn. Our aim must be transparent financial markets and effective protection of intellectual property, as well as minimum legal and social standards. For I am convinced that there can be no fair competition without common ground rules.

We can only achieve cohesion and solidarity in a global development partnership. With the Millennium Development Goals, the international community has laid down binding quantifiable targets and deadlines for the first time. Together with its EU partners, Germany has undertaken to reach the United Nations 0.7 per cent target no later than 2015. We stand by these pledges.

There can be no doubt that genuine partnership places all sides under an obligation — an obligation to step up the fight against corruption, to aim for better governance and to better protect human rights. We want to support Africa in particular. There have been encouraging developments on the continent but unfortunately, also, serious setbacks, for example in Zimbabwe.

"Growth and responsibility in the world economy" is, therefore, also the motto guiding this year's German presidency of the Group of Eight (G-8).

The second principle is that we have to strengthen the effectiveness of the United Nations. In my view, there is absolutely no doubt — the United Nations is the place where binding joint responses can be found to global challenges. But the United Nations is in need of reform. This is true, above all, of the Security Council. In many crisis situations it needs to

be able to come up quickly with universally binding proposals. To do this, it must have international legitimacy. However, the present composition of the Security Council no longer reflects the world today. There is, therefore, no alternative to adapting it to political realities.

My country has over the past years been actively involved in this debate. Germany is prepared to assume more responsibility, and to take on a permanent seat on the Security Council. What we need now are tangible results. We are by no means only at the start of our endeavours. The United Nations reform process has already produced some results, such as the report of the High-level Panel on United Nations system-wide coherence and the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission.

But time is short. There are numerous crises we have to deal with right now. And notwithstanding the many differing factors that have led to these crises, they all have one thing in common: they can only be solved multilaterally. The key to ending them is unity of purpose. This is particularly true with respect to Iran. Iran has continuously worked on its nuclear programme in clear contradiction of the demands of the International Atomic Energy Agency and the United Nations. Nobody should be in the slightest doubt as to the dangerous nature of this programme. Iran is ignoring Security Council resolutions. Iran is blatantly threatening Israel.

Let us not fool ourselves. If Iran were to acquire the nuclear bomb, the consequences would be disastrous, first and foremost for the existence of Israel; secondly, for the entire region; and ultimately for all of us in Europe and the world who attach any importance to the values of liberty, democracy and human dignity. That is why we have to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear arms.

The international community must not allow itself to be divided or have its decisive response to Iran's provocations undermined in any way. The world does not have to prove to Iran that Iran is building a nuclear bomb. Iran has to convince the world that it is not striving towards such a bomb.

Each and every German Chancellor before me has shouldered Germany's special responsibility for the existence of Israel. I, too, pledge to live up to this responsibility that our history has bequeathed us. It is one of the fundamental principles that guides my country. In other words, Israel's security is non-negotiable for me as German Chancellor. And that being the case, we have to do more than pay lip-service to it. Together with its partners, Germany will continue to seek a diplomatic solution. With this aim in mind, Germany will — if Iran does not come around — firmly advocate additional and harsher sanctions.

Unity of purpose is also the key in the fight against international terrorism, and especially in our efforts aimed at security and stability in Afghanistan. Unity of purpose is also vital for ensuring a peaceful future in Kosovo, where NATO and the European Union play a particularly active role. We want a solution under United Nations auspices. All parties are now called upon to show a willingness to compromise.

We also strongly support the efforts of the Middle East Quartet for peace in that region. Germany is a staunch advocate of the vision of two States, within secure borders and in peace, for the Jewish people in Israel and for the Palestinians in Palestine. We welcome the fact that both parties are continuing their talks with great vigour, above all with a view to the Middle East conference scheduled for November.

The third principle is that we have to strengthen our shared immutable values. In my opinion, one of the great dangers of the twenty-first century is that crises and conflicts could give rise to a clash of civilizations. This must not happen. For this reason, I plead for tolerance — tolerance as properly understood, not "anything goes" masquerading as tolerance. Everybody must be able to follow his or her own path, but it must be a path within the international community, not outside it.

This path is clearly departed from wherever massive human rights violations are committed, as in Darfur. A human tragedy is being played out there. Too much time has already been squandered. Now is the time to act. The crimes perpetrated there must not go unpunished. This path has been departed from in Myanmar, where human rights have likewise been disregarded for years. I urge the Government not to use force against the peaceful demonstrators and finally to make way for a democratic future for the country. This path is also departed from when political assassinations are carried out, as in the case of Rafik Hariri or the recent cowardly attack just a few days ago in Lebanon. The Hariri tribunal must commence its work with all

possible speed. I call on Syria to grant Lebanon diplomatic recognition at long last.

It is my fundamental conviction that we must, time and again, muster the strength to assert our shared values of freedom and democracy. In order to do that, we need an unshakeable foundation.

We have such a foundation: the Charter of the United Nations. It was written when Europe and wide swathes of the rest of the world lay in ruins. At the most basic level, it is a statement that, notwithstanding all the dark chapters and tortuous turns of our history, universal human rights do exist. In other words, what it all comes down to is respecting and protecting the dignity of each individual person. That is the underlying reason why we assemble here each year and work together for the future of our peoples.

Germany will do its utmost to advance that work. We look forward to fruitful cooperation with all partners in the United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 8.55 p.m.

United Nations A/62/PV.6

General Assembly

Sixty-second session

Official Records

6th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 26 September 2007, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 9.20 a.m.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Valdis Zatlers, President of the Republic of Latvia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Latvia.

Mr. Valdis Zatlers, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Valdis Zatlers, President of the Republic of Latvia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Zatlers: I wish to begin by congratulating you, Mr. Kerim, on your assumption of the post of President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. Your wise and energetic leadership will reflect the abilities of the people of your country and of our region as a whole. I also wish to congratulate and extend my best wishes to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, and to pledge him my full support. It is evident that the Secretary-General recognizes the multitude of challenges the world is facing today. Only two days ago, I took part in the high-level meeting on climate change here at the United Nations. That meeting was organized by the Secretary-General to highlight the urgent need for decisions that will prevent long-term negative consequences. Now we must all work together towards achieving a satisfactory outcome to the Bali Conference, which is to be held at the end of this year.

I welcome the fact that the Security Council was able to adopt the groundbreaking resolution 1769 (2007), which authorized the deployment of the Hybrid Operation in Darfur. It is now imperative that the resolution be translated into reality. We all recognize the difficulties involved. It is also imperative to continue the political process. Only a negotiated solution has the potential to bring sustainable peace to that long-suffering region.

To a great extent, the stability and prosperity of Iraq depend on support from its region. We therefore welcome the fact that the Security Council could unite to adopt resolution 1770 (2007). That resolution gives a renewed and strengthened mandate to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq. With the launch of the International Compact with Iraq, last May, the world community now possesses an effective instrument for rendering further assistance to the areas in Iraq where it is most needed. The Compact has already been used to achieve positive results. We encourage the Government of Iraq to continue to take steps towards promoting economic reform and achieving peace and stability for its people.

Just a couple of weeks ago, I visited Afghanistan. I had a chance to meet with President Karzai, representatives of the Afghan Government, Latvian troops and civilian experts. The message from all those meetings was clear. Providing assistance through the International Security Assistance Force is just one side

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of the coin; the other entails contributing to building a solid foundation for the country's sustainable development.

Latvia is present in Afghanistan as part of both the international military and the civilian rebuilding effort. Latvia's Government is contributing financially to the reconstruction of infrastructure in Afghanistan. However, it is my strong conviction that the key to success in Afghanistan is cooperation — cooperation among countries and international organizations. To succeed, the European Union, the United Nations, NATO and others must adopt a comprehensive, long-term approach to development assistance for the country.

In the Middle East, the past year has brought no significant breakthrough. Yet, we continue to place our trust in the work of the Quartet, which supports the efforts of responsible regional States in helping to calm the situation. It is a crucial tool to promote a negotiated, comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, in line with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council. I am sure that the Quartet's newly appointed Special Envoy will use his great experience and make sincere efforts to fulfil his challenging mandate.

The international community is currently also seized of the matter regarding the final status of Kosovo. The Secretary-General has endorsed the Comprehensive Proposal of his Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari. The Proposal currently remains the only viable diplomatic solution on the table. The active involvement of the European Union is important to achieve a lasting solution. We urge both parties to show flexibility and commitment to a peaceful negotiated outcome. We sincerely hope that the ongoing talks under the auspices of the Contact Group troika will result in success.

In my previous capacity as a surgeon, I performed many operations. But I also closely followed the recovery process of every one of my patients. I ensured that they got the necessary post-operative treatment and encouraged them to maintain healthy habits. In that phase I had to rely heavily on the work of my able and dedicated team. Likewise, it is not enough for the Security Council to prescribe peacekeeping operations, crucial as they are for international peace and security. The whole United Nations system is necessary for the long-term recovery of conflict zones.

In that regard, I would like to pay special tribute to the peacekeepers and to the United Nations staff working in difficult conditions on the ground. It is our duty in our capitals, and here at United Nations Headquarters, to support their efforts, each Member State according to its capacity. At the same time, we expect high standards in peacekeeping forces.

For many decades, Latvia suffered extensively from foreign occupation. Now that we have regained our freedom, we hope to prevent the suffering of others. We wish to promote the healing process. The international community must bring to justice those who have committed war crimes and massive violations of human rights. Latvia commends the work of the International Criminal Court. We have placed our hopes in the Peacebuilding Commission — that it will be an effective tool for consolidating long-term peace.

Even where military conflict is not a factor, human security in many parts of the world is undermined by poverty, hunger and disease. The 2007 *Millennium Development Goals* Report gave us some good news. However, it warned us that the Goals will not be achieved by the year 2015 — certainly not in sub-Saharan Africa — unless our efforts are scaled up. Latvia therefore supports the call to review progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and accelerate action.

Latvia is a candidate in the 2010 elections for the Economic and Social Council. We have know-how to share, and we also have empathy for the pain that reforms may cause. As an emerging donor, we have undertaken commitments in the area of overseas development assistance. We believe that our recent intensive and successful experience in development will be an asset to the work of the Council.

Latvia has a strong commitment to multilateralism and the values embodied in the Charter of the United Nations. We want to see an Organization that embodies effectiveness, efficiency and authority. It is regrettable that the reform process launched at the 2005 World Summit has been slow and uneven. We recognize the forces that make the reform so difficult, but we must not give in to fatigue and frustration. Management reform is vital. I already mentioned the dire necessity for a comprehensive approach among the

different international players on the ground. Likewise, there is a great need for system-wide coherence of the various United Nations funds and programmes. The provision of aid should be targeted and efficient. Our focus should be on those in need. We look forward to assessing the results of the "One UN" pilot programme, which is now under way in eight volunteer countries.

The beginnings of the new Human Rights Council were a cause for concern. Still, we are confident that after making important decisions on institution-building earlier this year, Member States will take full advantage of the Human Rights Council. We have to live up to our task to further promote and protect human rights. The Council now has the tools, but it will be up to Member States to use those tools. It will be up to Member States to advance the credibility of the United Nations as an Organization able and willing to protect and promote human rights.

Latvia has always placed the promotion of human rights among its top priorities. In the light of that commitment, we have decided to aim for membership in the Human Rights Council in the 2014 elections.

No reform will be more difficult or more significant than that of the Security Council. The Security Council has had many achievements. However, we share the widespread belief that the composition and the working methods of the Council need to be brought up to date. We have stated many times our reasons for supporting the model of reform being promoted by the G4 nations, namely, Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan. We consider it to be the best of the models currently available. We welcome the prospect of intergovernmental negotiations beginning in the current session and hope that they will produce early positive results.

The United Nations is as important as ever, being the only truly universal forum for global dialogue. We must not forget that it is also the only truly universal forum for decision-making and action. But above all, we must emphasize that this is the forum where all States, big and small, have a voice. This is also a forum where all States have a responsibility to contribute.

Latvia looks forward to a fruitful sixty-second session of the General Assembly.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Latvia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Valdis Zatlers, President of the Republic of Latvia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Micheline Calmy-Rey, President of the Swiss Confederation

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Swiss Confederation.

Mrs. Micheline Calmy-Rey, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Micheline Calmy-Rey, President of the Swiss Confederation, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Calmy-Rey (*spoke in French*): At the outset, Sir, I should like to congratulate you on your election as President of the General Assembly, and to assure you of my country's full support during the sixty-second session.

All of us here share the hope for a more peaceful and harmonious world. At a time when civilian populations are the targets of suicide attacks and sophisticated weapons, when children are forced to become soldiers, and climate change poses a threat to the survival of our planet, how are we meeting our responsibilities? Where does the responsibility lie when millions of men and women are suffering from malnutrition and their most basic needs are not being met, when injustice is everywhere, and when the environment is being destroyed? How can we overcome those scourges assailing human beings throughout the world? How can we translate our responsibilities into action?

In attempting to answer those questions, we have to acknowledge two facts. The first is that respect for human rights, the rule of law and good governance are the prerequisites both to achieving lasting peace and security and to protecting the environment. We know now that systematic violations of human rights and flagrant deficiencies in the rule of law are often the source of conflicts. The second concerns the nature of

conflicts. On the ground, battle lines are being blurred. State forces are confronting non-State armed groups. Warlords, terrorists and criminal gangs dictate the rules. Civilians rather than soldiers are the primary targets.

It is no longer possible to limit security policy to the traditional State framework. The focus now must be first and foremost on the security of the individual. Accordingly, Governments and non-State armed groups alike are called on to respect certain basic rules common to all.

If we are to achieve results, confrontation must give way to dialogue and efforts to find solutions. Negotiation, dialogue and diplomacy are the tools for achieving success. We must overcome the barriers that exist between different sectors and disciplines in the field of international relations. We must develop alliances based on shared values. That approach should enable us to find solutions by cutting across regional, ideological and cultural boundaries. The recent past has shown what can be achieved. The International Criminal Court, the Human Rights Council and the Anti-personnel Landmines Convention were all the result of broad-based coalitions of countries in all regions of the world.

However, dialogue alone will not be enough. Experience has shown that, without concrete objectives, debates between players with very different views of the world can sometimes serve to accentuate differences. In contrast, efforts to devise and implement actions that are concrete and practical make for cohabitation between different communities. It is for that reason that Switzerland supports such initiatives as the Alliance of Civilizations, along with the implementation plan proposed by the secretariat of the Alliance.

Coherent overall solutions to the crises that are currently affecting the international order cannot be implemented unless we take into account the interests of all the communities concerned. Switzerland does all it can to promote dialogue with all parties. That is particularly the case in Lebanon, where we are offering the political forces a forum in which to seek a way out of the current political crisis in the interest of long-term stability.

Recent developments in the occupied Palestinian territories have reminded us once again, with tragic intensity, of the need to respect those principles. In that regard as well, the involvement of all parties is necessary if there is to be a lasting solution.

The same can be said for the situation in Darfur. My country hopes that resolution 1769 (2007), which for the first time envisages close cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union, will provide the inhabitants of that region with an opportunity to live in peace and to achieve reconciliation after so many years of suffering.

The situation in Myanmar is alarming. Switzerland calls on the Government of Myanmar to renounce all forms of violence against demonstrators and civilians. Switzerland favours dialogue among all the parties concerned, under the aegis of the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General.

Lastly, there can be no peace or security without international justice. Switzerland supports in particular the work of the International Criminal Court. Its permanent nature and the possibility of the Security Council referring situations to the Court — as it did in the case of Darfur — gives that institution a preventive effect. For that effect to be achieved, the Court must have the full support of the international community, which must ensure that all States cooperate fully with the Court.

Human security policy also applies to environmental threats. The actions of humankind have changed the climate of the planet. Those changes are taking place on a global scale and are resulting in rising temperatures, radical changes in precipitation patterns, rising sea levels and a disruption to the balance of nature. Taken as a whole, those phenomena pose a major threat to millions of people and the places where people live, their cultures and their living conditions. The risks to security, health and development are discussed in the *Fourth Assessment Report* of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Today environmental problems are a threat to security. At the political level, they require that we act responsibly as human beings. They also require the forming of alliances to protect our natural resources. Although we have established institutions and international mechanisms to combat underdevelopment and promote peace and respect for human rights, we have not done enough with regard to the environment. It is true that we have a series of international conventions and national programmes and legislation.

But environmental governance is fragmented and lacks clear objectives. We therefore need to join together to identify and implement commitments in order to better manage resources and efforts and to protect the biosphere. We also need to mobilize the United Nations system in order to respond to climate change effectively and coherently.

Switzerland therefore hopes that we will set ambitious goals for ourselves in the second phase of the Kyoto Protocol. We are ready to make a substantial contribution to that collective effort, in which the entire international community must join. Switzerland believes that, in order to have legitimacy, any future international regime to address climate change will require the participation of all countries. In our view, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Changes and the Kyoto Protocol provide the most appropriate starting points for all deliberations and negotiations on climate change.

Addressing the economic, social and environmental aspects of development based on respect for human rights is both a challenge and a goal for all of us as we seek to build a world that is both freer and more secure. The international community has adopted many development goals in recent decades. However, additional efforts must still be made to ensure greater coherence in the operational system of the United Nations. With its funds, programmes and specialized agencies, the system has at its disposal an excellent network through which to ensure its presence on the ground. It also has great moral and technical legitimacy and substantial operational capacity.

Unfortunately the system remains fragmented and its transaction costs are very high — costs which are to a great extent borne by beneficiary countries themselves. Major adjustments — some of which are described in the report entitled "Delivering as One" — need to be carried out promptly in the field so that United Nations operational bodies can meet the needs of partner countries more effectively. Negotiations on the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, which are due to begin in a few weeks, will provide the appropriate framework to determine what measures are needed — especially on the basis of the experiences of pilot countries that are applying the concept of "One United Nations".

We stand today at the midpoint of the timetable for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Although there is no denying that progress has been made at various levels, there is still much to be done. All of us — Governments, multilateral institutions, non-governmental organizations and the private sector — must combine our efforts across a wide front that encompasses the national, regional and international spheres. Given the upcoming high-level dialogue on financing for development, I shall limit myself merely to recalling that all of us have a common interest in improving the efficiency and the impact of development assistance and in increasing the volume of resources made available for it through official channels. We already know that results in this area can only be achieved through very considerable joint efforts by all partners concerned.

The Organization has begun a process of reform in order to better respond to global challenges. So as to strengthen the credibility and efficiency of the efforts of the United Nations, we must demonstrate our determination to fully carry out those reforms. There was real progress in the past year, including the beginning of the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council. That illustrates the ability of the United Nations to carry out ambitious reforms in order to respond to the challenges of the twenty-first century.

Switzerland is advocating for an overall improvement in the working methods of the Security Council. My country will continue its efforts to improve transparency in sanctions committees and to ensure that the addition and removal of names of persons and entities on sanctions lists are in conformity with the principles of the rule of law and human rights.

Efficient management and a better targeted use of available resources continue to pose a serious challenge for the Organization. Switzerland welcomes the determination of the Secretary-General to make the efficiency of the United Nations system one of his priorities. Given the progress made this year, but especially because of the challenges that remain, Switzerland believes that it is essential to continue the process of reform already under way. My country will therefore continue to support the efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon aimed at strengthening the United Nations and making the Organization more efficient.

If we want to move ahead, if we are determined to overcome the varied and interdependent challenges facing the globalized world of today, and if we want to free individual human beings from fear and want, we must focus on concrete objectives. To that end, let us resolve to work tirelessly to overcome our differences in the interest of the nations and peoples we represent.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Swiss Confederation for the statement she has just made.

Mrs. Micheline Calmy-Rey, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted from the General Assembly.

Address by Mr. Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdellahi, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania

The President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by His Excellency Mr. Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdellahi, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania.

Mr. Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdellahi, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Mr. Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdellahi, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ould Cheikh Abdellahi (*spoke in Arabic*): I am pleased to extend my warmest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. We have every confidence in your efforts to strengthen peace within a global system characterized by justice, balance and stability.

I would also like to congratulate your predecessor, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa, on her successful efforts to advance debate and dialogue on the main concerns and problems of our day.

I also wish to congratulate and thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who, from the day he took office, began to promote the reform of the Organization, in addition to addressing international peace and security issues.

Allow me, in particular, to welcome the fact that the General Assembly at its sixty-first session focused on development issues, together with the fight against poverty, the adverse effects of climate change, economic globalization, promoting dialogue and understanding between civilizations and religions, introducing modern good governance systems, and the consolidation of democracy.

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which is an urgent priority, requires that we all intensify our efforts and promote cooperation and coordination so as to establish conditions conducive to sustainable, comprehensive and balanced development.

We believe that encouraging the spirit and values of understanding, dialogue and complementarity between civilizations and nations, upholding the rule of law, and expanding justice and equity are the speediest way to ensure peace and security in the world and eradicate hatred and confrontation between peoples. The continuation of seemingly intractable problems, the widening of the gap between rich and poor, the existence of structural dysfunctions in the global economy, the absence of justice, and the prevalence of injustice and despair are factors that perpetuate pockets of tension and conflict and encourage extremism and terrorism.

We in Mauritania have rejected terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. We strongly condemn it and, at the same time, we continue to adhere to Islamic values in our society — which are based on tolerance and the rejection of violence and extremism and call for understanding and brotherhood.

Under the Charter of the United Nations we are committed to join efforts to maintain international peace and security. That commitment continues to be undermined by conflict situations, some of which have persisted since the founding of the Organization. The Arab-Israeli conflict is undeniably the one that generates the most antagonism and most threatens international peace and security. That conflict continues despite the fact that the framework setting out the general conditions for a just, comprehensive and lasting settlement of the conflict has been defined and reaffirmed over the years by the Security Council and the General Assembly. Those basic requirements constitute the very essence of the Arab Peace Initiative. That Initiative guarantees peace, security and the recognition of the State of Israel by Arab countries in

exchange for an end to the occupation of Arab territories and an agreement to seek out mutually acceptable solutions for other outstanding issues. Israel must seize this historic opportunity and subsequently comply with international law so that the peoples of the region can at last live in peace — and in particular so that the Palestinian people can regain their usurped rights and be able to establish an independent State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Mauritania is of course following closely the issue of the Western Sahara. We are pleased with the recent steps that have led to the resumption of direct negotiations. We reiterate our support for the efforts of the Secretary-General to find a definitive solution acceptable to all parties that guarantees stability in the region.

With regard to Darfur, we are pleased about the agreement reached between the Government of the Sudan, the African Union and the United Nations. We hope that all parties will join efforts to ensure that peace, understanding and accord prevail as soon as possible among our Sudanese brothers and sisters.

As for the situation in Côte d'Ivoire, we were pleased to note the remarkable progress made on the path towards civic peace in the country. We hope that overall stability will prevail in that brotherly country and that it will once again assume its rightful place in the West African subregion and in the continent as a whole.

The African Union, working with the United Nations, is making intensive efforts to resolve the crises on the African continent. However, social and economic progress undoubtedly offers the best solution to those conflicts. Africa's share of the world economy has declined in the past two decades. The continent now lags behind in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Yet, there are real signs of improvement in the situation on the continent. New economic opportunities now exist, thanks in large part to the growing demand for emerging markets, but Africa still needs further official development assistance and greater flows of foreign direct investment. I should like to point out that African countries are of course primarily responsible for their own development. They must also ensure the rule of law, promote good governance and establish a framework conducive to direct foreign investment.

This year, we in Mauritania improved the democratic process by establishing a pluralistic system based on a Constitution that guarantees the right of the peaceful transfer of power. Our country has therefore undergone a major democratic transformation. We have done so through presidential elections conducted in an atmosphere of transparency, honesty and open competition — as was noted by national and international observers, including the United Nations, the European Union, the League of Arab States, the African Union, the International Organization of la Francophonie and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. In the same atmosphere of freedom and pluralism, municipal and legislative elections made it possible to choose the representatives of the people to municipal councils and the two houses of Parliament. We paid particular attention to Mauritania's women in both elections, with 20 per cent of contested seats reserved for them. As a result, women are now more represented than ever in the legislative and executive branches, as well as in local administration, diplomacy and management.

Moreover, my Government has made sustained efforts to strengthen national unity and to ensure transparency in the management of public affairs. Among other things, those efforts have led to steps to secure the dignified return of Mauritanian refugees residing in Senegal and Mali, so as to usher in a new era of brotherhood and national reconciliation in our country.

In the same vein, we have enacted a law criminalizing slavery. A high court of justice was also established in order, if necessary, to prosecute the president of the country and senior Government officials through an integral procedure that aims at institutionalizing the norms of good governance, modernizing institutions and strengthening the oversight mechanism through greater and direct participation by the representatives of the people and of civil society. We are more determined than ever to persevere along this path because we believe it is the best way to strengthen national unity and achieve development, security, stability and prosperity for the nation and for our citizens.

Mauritania is resolutely committed to contributing to relations of cooperation and solidarity in our region, in accordance with the ambitions and aspirations of our people. In this framework, our faith in the Arab Maghreb Union as a strategic choice for the

region and our faith in the Arab League and the African Union are unwavering, given our firm commitment to the spirit of fraternity and solidarity and to relations of cooperation, friendship and good neighbourliness that link our country to its Arab and African environment. At the same time, our country remains determined to strengthen the bases of dialogue, exchange and understanding between peoples and civilizations, namely within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue.

Mauritania reiterates its commitment to the ideals and purposes of the United Nations, the only multilateral framework at the service of humanity as a whole. Faced with the multiple challenges and threats in today's world, it is our common duty to make the United Nations a melting pot where we can harmonize our efforts to implement the priorities stated in the Millennium Declaration and at various international conferences. In a globalized world marked by the accumulation of wealth and an unprecedented acceleration of technological and scientific progress, it is up to us to benefit equitably from the possibilities that are offered to all peoples and to establish the best living conditions coupled with greater freedom. We took this commitment when we created the United Nations more than 60 years ago. Today we have the means to assume our responsibilities and to uphold this often reiterated commitment.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdellahi, President of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mrs. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Finland.

Mrs. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations Her Excellency Mrs. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, and to invite her to address the Assembly.

President Halonen: I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, and express our support for your leadership of the General Assembly at this session. Finland aligns itself with the statement of the European Union.

The Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals continue to serve as our common pledge to create a better future for everyone. The United Nations is our world organization, and in addressing global challenges, the United Nations is the key forum for our cooperation.

In order to achieve comprehensive security, we must strive not only for security, but also for development and human rights. In the World Summit two years ago, we decided that the United Nations system should be reformed to better ensure the implementation of these three fundamental principles. We should spare no efforts to continue the overall reform of the United Nations.

A more just world is a safer world. Making the Economic and Social Council more effective is an important part of the United Nations reform and of the concept of broad security.

Establishing a new United Nations institution is truly a challenging task. We know that from our own experience. Finland was a member of the Human Rights Council during its first year. But we have to go on. We must sustain our efforts to make the Council a credible institution, capable of defending and promoting globally the human rights of women, men and children. Our good words and intentions must lead to strong action.

The new Peacebuilding Commission must be developed into a platform that can successfully assist countries struggling in post-conflict situations. To support that work, Governments, parliaments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector must also work together. The Peacebuilding Fund must be used as an effective tool to respond to the immediate needs of post-conflict countries.

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals calls for coherent action. Finland strongly supports the recommendations of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence. The objective

of One United Nations at the country level is worth striving for.

We also must reinforce our efforts to address the challenges in the fields of health and education, as so many speakers have mentioned here.

Finland warmly welcomes the Panel's recommendations concerning gender. We do need to take decisive measures to promote gender awareness across the entire United Nations system. We support the proposal to set up a new, consolidated gender agency with a new Under-Secretary-General position at its head.

In this context, I would like to stress the importance of engaging women in all phases of crisis management: conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, without forgetting peace talks. Let me give one example: the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Middle East Initiative. I believe that the cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian women under this initiative can help to restart the peace negotiations. I also use this opportunity to state that Finland is preparing its national action plan to advance the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

A stronger United Nations also needs reform of the Secretariat. In this regard, we welcome the additional emphasis given to the rule of law. Support for the rule of law is a necessity in the consolidation of global security.

Sustainable development requires us to consistently promote fairer globalization and the well-being of nature. Climate change affects the future of the whole of mankind. Finland highlights the necessity to reach, as soon as possible, a globally inclusive agreement on the post-2012 climate regime. The United Nations has a central role to play in this process.

Every nation has the right to develop and to aim for growth and prosperity. Industrialized countries must demonstrate solidarity with developing countries and take all possible steps to promote access to environmentally sound technologies for everyone.

I believe that the tone of the climate change debate is developing in a promising direction. Many Member States and various regions and social actors have become active and have produced initiatives concerning the development of climate policy. We have to take advantage of that as an asset in the run-up to the Bali Climate Change Conference, to be held in December.

The high-level event on climate change held on 24 September was a success. I feel that it gave us the political support that we will need when we are heading towards Bali. Everyone's input will, of course, be required. Finland appreciates the fact that the President of the General Assembly has made this topic one of his priorities.

We need effective international cooperation in the field of disarmament and non-proliferation. For example, given the number of victims in today's conflicts, small arms and light weapons are indeed weapons of mass destruction. Finland, together with more than 150 other States, supports the process aimed at the adoption of an international arms trade treaty.

The role of the United Nations is vital in resolving numerous crises around the world. This morning, we heard news from Burma/Myanmar, where the people's fight for freedom and human rights has been suppressed. We must react. United Nations activities need political support and our resources.

We value the determination of the Secretary-General in searching for a solution to the crisis in the Sudan. The new peacekeeping operation in Darfur will increase the total number of United Nations troops to more than 100,000. That remarkable figure proves that the United Nations enjoys the trust of the international community. We welcome Security Council resolution 1778 (2007), adopted yesterday, on an international presence in Chad and the Central African Republic.

In order to achieve success in crisis management, we need partnerships and shared responsibilities. For example, the African Union and the European Union have been valuable partners of the United Nations. The support of local and regional actors is critical for successful United Nations peacekeeping.

We Europeans believe that resolving Kosovo's status is vitally important. In that process, the United Nations Special Envoy has played a pivotal role. We encourage all parties to engage constructively in finding a solution to that problem.

Let me assure the Assembly that Finland supports a stronger United Nations for a better world. It is up to us to deliver on our commitments to achieving better

security, sustainable development and respect for the human rights of all people. I wish to express our firmest support to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, in pursuing such efforts.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Finland for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov, President of Turkmenistan

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Turkmenistan.

Mr. Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov, President of Turkmenistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov, President of Turkmenistan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Berdymukhammedov (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the people and the Government of Turkmenistan, I wish to express my good wishes to all members and to congratulate them on the beginning of the sixty-second session of the General Assembly.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Ban Ki-moon on his election to the post of Secretary-General and to wish him every success in discharging his challenging responsibilities.

I should also like to congratulate Mr. Srgjan Kerim on his election to the presidency of the Assembly. I am certain that under his guidance, the work of the Assembly will be effective and fruitful.

Since the very first days of its independence, Turkmenistan has considered the ideals of the United Nations to be fully in accordance with our aspirations in terms of relations with the international community. The basic principles of the Organization — the maintenance of peace, equality of rights, respect for the sovereignty of all States and their right to choose their own path of development — formed the basis for our country's foreign policy, in which cooperation with the United Nations has become a priority area.

Time has proved that the choice made by our country was right and well founded. In 15 years of intense cooperation with the United Nations, Turkmenistan has found its own place in the international arena and has gained invaluable experience in interacting with the world community and developing harmonious, equal and mutually respectful relations with other nations. We have every right to be proud of the fact that it was within these walls that resolution 50/80 [A], on the permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan, was adopted on 12 December 1995 — a historic event for our country. It is not an exaggeration to say that the resolution on neutrality has become the foundation of our foreign policy and has played a major role in shaping our national policy.

Cooperation with the United Nations will continue to drive our foreign policy. Here, I should like to emphasize that such cooperation enriches our bilateral and multilateral ties and makes them more meaningful. That is most apparent in regional matters, where the participation of the United Nations and its specialized agencies promotes convergence of States' approaches to issues, thus creating a favourable political, diplomatic and legal environment for their resolution through concerted effort.

In that context, I consider the recent decision to establish a United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy in Central Asia to be a major milestone. I am confident that the inauguration of the Centre, set for the end of the year, will mark an entirely new phase in the efforts of our country and our neighbours to ensure peace, security and stability in the region.

Turkmenistan is fully prepared to engage in constructive and fruitful cooperation with the Centre. We are certain that its work will be a strong and positive force in resolving the problems faced by our region. We highly appreciate the decision to establish the Centre in Ashgabat, capital of neutral Turkmenistan. We see that as an expression of the Organization's confidence in our country. Mindful of our great responsibility, I assure the Assembly that our country will do everything necessary to make the Centre's work effective and fruitful.

Notwithstanding current changes in the world, the great humanist ideals of the United Nations and the principles of its Charter should continue to serve as the

moral and legal pillar of the international order. Only on this basis can the issues of United Nations reform be considered. United Nations reform as a whole should be meaningful and goal-oriented and correspond to the objective realities of the age. In this respect, Turkmenistan supports the efforts of the United Nations Member States and the Secretary-General to make the work of the Organization more dynamic, efficient, transparent and democratic.

In that context, Turkmenistan shares the view that it is necessary to improve further the structure of the Security Council and to develop closer and more effective interaction between the Security Council and the General Assembly. We are in favour of reforming the United Nations, making it stronger, enhancing its work and expanding the role and functions of the Security Council as a guarantor of international peace, security and stability.

Turkmenistan's neutral status, its foreign policy doctrine of non-affiliation with any blocs and its rejection of the use of force as a means of resolving international disputes predetermine our stance with regard to the issues of peace and security. In this context, Turkmenistan fully supports international efforts to combat the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, their delivery systems and related technologies. Accordingly, Turkmenistan has been taking and will continue to take consistent practical steps to ensure implementation of the international legal framework on the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. In its legislation, Turkmenistan proclaims its refusal to possess, manufacture, store or transport nuclear, chemical, bacteriological and other types of weapons of mass destruction or related technologies. In 2005, the People's Council of Turkmenistan decided to adopt a Statement on Supporting the Initiatives of International Organizations to Combat the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. Last year, in Semipalatinsk, Turkmenistan, together with other States of the region, signed the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia. That document is unique in many ways, since, for the first time since the Second World War, it proclaims the establishment of a vast region free of nuclear weapons on the map of the northern hemisphere. It is noteworthy that our joint initiative echoes the aspirations of the majority of countries and that it has been highly acclaimed by the international community and endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly. Let me take this opportunity to express our appreciation to all States, international and regional organizations that have supported the document.

However, we need to realize that Central Asia is not isolated. Our region has thousands of historical, ethnic and humanitarian ties with neighbouring States. In this context, Turkmenistan's concern with the events in Afghanistan is justified. We rejoice at the success of the Afghan people in building a peaceful life; we feel the difficulties they face as our own. Turkmenistan is assisting Afghanistan in rebuilding its economy, by providing professional training, in the construction of social facilities and by providing oil and power to some provinces of the country. Together with the international community, and with the United Nations, we are striving to help achieve stability for Afghanistan and to help the brotherly people of that country to achieve peace and well-being.

Geographically, Turkmenistan is conveniently located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. Over its years of independence, our country has built a modern transportation and communication infrastructure. As an important element of international trade and economic relations, it may also become a factor leading to significant revitalization and further development of cultural interaction between the regions, thus promoting rapprochement and mutual understanding between nations. It is in that spirit that Turkmenistan defines its international energy strategy, aimed at developing a multiple pipeline system to bring Turkmen energy resources to international markets on a stable and long-term basis. This strategy is not dependent on either political circumstances or any kind of ideological bias. Our stand on this matter is a stand of principle and full transparency. We support the implementation of economically justified pipeline projects that would guarantee security, including environmental safety. That will determine their multi-track character. In this context, Turkmenistan is in favour of the mutually advantageous use of energy resources by both exporters and consumers.

From this point of view, we are convinced that the implementation of projects aimed at bringing Turkmen energy to international markets will provide another impulse to stimulate inter-State and interregional trade and economic relations. That will also serve to promote further economic growth in the countries where pipelines run and assist in the

resolution of issues relating to the provision of light and heat, the development of production and social infrastructure and job creation, which will, ultimately, have a positive effect on the overall political climate within and beyond the region.

Turkmenistan is taking very seriously the issue of environmental protection and a whole range of other issues that will have to be addressed by engaging the capacity of the international community at large. In this context, we support the efforts of the Secretary-General to promote and develop broad international cooperation, with a view to finding a comprehensive solution to this global problem. To that end, Turkmenistan is taking specific steps at the national level. Up to 200 million dollars are annually earmarked in the national budget for environmental protection. Our country has passed legislation setting standards to prevent environmental pollution, and it is introducing technologies to ensure environmental safety of our key sector, the oil and gas industry. Already for over 10 years, Turkmenistan has been implementing a large-scale nation-wide programme entitled "The Green Belt", which has resulted in millions of trees being planted on thousands of hectares all over the country.

We are fully committed to the goals of the Kyoto Protocol, and we are ready to cooperate with all international partners in implementing its provisions.

As a full-fledged member of the international community, Turkmenistan is developing a genuinely democratic and legal foundation for its national statehood. The greatest value of our society is the individual, and his or her rights and freedoms. Today, this is at the centre of our State policy.

Processes aimed at the further democratization of public and political life, the establishment of civil society, the introduction of modern electoral mechanisms and the formation of local government bodies are gaining momentum. A constructive innovative search for a reasonable balance between the authority of the State and society at large is under way. We are not trying to speed up the process, and we are not pushing it into some artificial time frame. The most important thing is that it has become irreversible and is receiving recognition and support both within and outside the country. And, in this respect, we highly appreciate the assistance provided to us by international organizations in general and by the United Nations in particular.

Today, Turkmenistan is open to the world; it is open to broad-scale partnership in all areas of activity. Together with the rest of the community of nations, our country is ready to work further to promote the principles of international law and the ideals of humanism, justice, tolerance and mutual respect as determinant factors in modern relations among States.

The status of permanent neutrality not only imposes on our country important foreign policy obligations but also obliges us to shape our foreign and social policies accordingly. In that context, I would like to emphasize that Turkmenistan's neutrality is irreversible and that our commitment to the resultant international obligations is firm. We intend to follow this path with resolve, and we will always be open to international cooperation promoting implementation of the strategic priorities of the community of nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Turkmenistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov, President of Turkmenistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Lithuania.

Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Valdas Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Adamkus: It is always inspiring to come to this forum and, time and again, observe that there are many more things that unite rather than divide nations around the globe. Indeed, we are united in our vision of a world free of violence, where every individual has freedom of choice and where human dignity is respected. We are united in our aspirations to

meet the challenges of the twenty-first century, because we know that in a globalized world a threat to one nation is a threat to all nations.

Nowhere is this new reality more evident than in the much-needed work of the United Nations. Poverty, imbalances in development, armaments, the spread of ideologies of hatred, cybercrime: those are some of the threats that we face today. The new, daunting challenges are different in kind. Therefore, both individual States and the international community have to find ways to deal with this new reality and how to respond better to new challenges.

Seven years ago, at this United Nations conclave, all nations made a historic step, pledging to eradicate poverty, illiteracy and environmental degradation, and to improve health and promote gender equality. That was our response to the challenges of the time. This year, we are halfway to the 2015 deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Over the past few years, an estimated 135 million people managed to get out of extreme poverty. Significant positive changes are taking place in the fields of primary education for poor children, child vaccination and better access to retroviral treatment for persons with HIV/AIDS, to name but a few.

Yet overall progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals remains uneven and too slow. If we want to live up to our commitments, we must increase our efforts considerably and urgently.

The twenty-first century has also confronted us with such challenges as a deteriorating environment. Global warming affects all aspects of our lives from social and economic growth to changing habitats and migration patterns. Time is clearly not on our side. We are taking measures to adapt our policies to counter climate change, but our actions are obviously too slow and sometimes too reluctant. Therefore, Lithuania welcomes the Secretary-General's focus on climate change as a global challenge that requires global concerted efforts. We believe that the United Nations climate change process is the appropriate forum for negotiating future global action in this effort.

But that already may not be enough. I am convinced that the world needs a more coherent and inclusive system of international environmental governance. This system needs to be strengthened by establishing a United Nations Environment Organization, based on the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) with a revised mandate. With December's Bali climate change conference in mind, I call on all countries to come to the negotiating table later this year with the ambition of concluding by 2009 a global and comprehensive post-2012 agreement. Before such an agreement is reached, Lithuania is doing its best to fulfil the commitment of the European Union to achieve at least a 20 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 compared to 1990 levels.

We have started to focus on a wider use of indigenous and renewable energy resources. The share of these resources in the primary energy balance in Lithuania will increase up to 12 per cent by the year 2010. Last year alone, we planted 21,000 hectares of trees, an area that corresponds to 32,000 soccer fields. For a country the size of Lithuania, that is no small measure. These are but a few of the concrete steps by which my country shows political will sufficient to fight new global challenges.

The necessity to fit in and effectively integrate into the international system has been the cornerstone of our policies since we regained our independence in 1990. Membership in the European Union and NATO is the best example of success in that effort. Now we are taking on increasing responsibility in the fields of security, stability and sustainability in our region and beyond. We are active at the front of the war against terrorism, including our contribution to restoring stability and security in Iraq. We are leading a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan's Ghor province. Over the past two years, Lithuania has doubled its development aid budget and has committed to increasing it to 0.33 per cent of its gross national income by 2015. Our contribution to global security and the vision of inclusiveness and of building a "Europe whole and free" motivated Lithuania to offer its candidacy for the chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in 2010.

If Lithuania and the Baltic region in general are a success story in terms of establishing themselves in a new global environment, some countries in our region are not. We may only guess why those countries perceive the integration of democracies on their borders as a national threat. We feel sorry for a society at large when its Government chooses to spend the country's natural riches on guns and not on democratic reforms. Clearly, we should not tolerate attempts to falsify historical facts about the Soviet occupation of

the Baltic States or the denial of the deliberately caused *Holodomor* in Ukraine, which killed millions.

Fitting in is never easy. Therefore, we consider that the United Nations could help Member States to efficiently integrate into the international system, as the European Union is already doing by engaging its neighbours in this process through various neighbourhood instruments and cooperation formats.

However, our readiness to stand up and speak openly to States if they cross the line is also an indispensable element of that effort. We should ask ourselves: where did we fail, that the killings of hundreds of thousands of innocent people were permitted to take place in Darfur?

Today conflicts occur on every continent, with particularly grave consequences in Africa and the Middle East. Some conflicts in the world, however, are less visible. But that does not make them less dangerous. Frozen conflicts in Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus may become very hot one day unless we act immediately. We consider it morally unacceptable for the international community to remain indifferent to the frozen conflicts in the GUAM area. Let us not forget that it is not only the conflicts that are frozen; the lives and dreams of the people living in those areas of artificial conflict are also frozen. That is where the United Nations should be more visible and more outspoken. That also applies to Kosovo, where attempts to create another frozen conflict must be excluded.

It is not only States, but also the United Nations itself that must adapt to new, changing realities. We encourage the Secretary-General to continue the reform of the United Nations, in particular making the Organization's operational system more consolidated, coherent and effective, with the highest standards of conduct and ethics. We must proceed with real actions in carrying through the reform of the United Nations. The Secretary-General has my full support in this context. He should be applauded for his bold and forward-thinking vision of the reform in United Nations peacekeeping. We welcome all efforts by the United Nations to streamline and reform the peacekeeping procurement system.

I encourage the United Nations to further strengthen, develop and use its capabilities in the area of good offices and conflict prevention, as envisioned in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1). That would enable us to address many issues in a more efficient manner and, hopefully, to avoid costly peacekeeping operations.

The prevention of nuclear proliferation and the pursuit of nuclear disarmament in accordance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons are crucial for global peace and security. We need to strengthen the authority of the Treaty. Lithuania will support the process leading to the elaboration of a binding international arms trade treaty. Lithuania will also continue to increase practical assistance and funding to international mine action projects and the implementation of the Programme of Action on Small Arms and Light Weapons.

Two years have passed since the adoption of the World Summit Outcome, which elaborated on the concept of the responsibility to protect, and yet we have been too slow in responding to massive violations of human rights and mass atrocities. The principle of the responsibility to protect can no longer be confined to paper. We therefore encourage the Secretary-General to follow up on the World Summit document and take measures to operationalize that principle.

Only a reformed and proactive United Nations will be truly instrumental and effective. Only such a United Nations will have the required support and financing. Only such a United Nations will be trusted by the people.

The ability to adapt is the quality of the strong. Fitting in is the least we can do for future generations. It is the responsibility of every nation and the international community as such.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Lithuania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Valdus Adamkus, President of the Republic of Lithuania, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, President of the Republic of Zambia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zambia.

Mr. Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome His Excellency Mr. Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, President of the Republic of Zambia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mwanawasa: Allow me at the outset to convey my warm congratulations to Mr. Srgjan Kerim on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. My delegation is confident that with his immense wealth of experience, he will steer the session very successfully. Zambia assures him of its total support during his tenure of office.

Let me, at this point, pay tribute to Mr. Kurt Waldheim, the fourth Secretary-General of the United Nations, and later President of Austria, who died on 14 June 2007. To us, he was a great diplomat who made Africa one of his priorities, especially at the height of the liberation struggle in Southern Africa.

May I take this opportunity to thank Her Excellency Sheikha Rashed Al Khalifa of Bahrain for having presided over the affairs of the sixty-first session in an exemplary manner. Among her accomplishments was the carrying forward of the United Nations reforms called for at the 2005 World Summit. It was gratifying to have a lady preside over the highest office of the General Assembly after almost three decades of male dominance. I hope that this organ will not again take that long to have an excellent woman as President.

Let me now congratulate Mr. Ban Ki-moon of the Republic of Korea on his election as the eighth Secretary-General of the United Nations. I am confident that he will build upon the strong foundation that was laid by his predecessor, Kofi Annan of Ghana, to whom I wish to pay tribute for the manner in which he steered the Organization during his tenure in office. He made Africa proud, and I wish him success in his current and future endeavours.

Our world today presents many challenges. These include abject poverty for the majority of the world's inhabitants, underdevelopment, conflict, human trafficking, climate change, terrorism, violations of human rights, the HIV/AIDS pandemic and gender inequality. While some of these challenges have only recently emerged, others have been with us from time immemorial. These challenges cannot be entirely resolved within national boundaries or at the regional level. They can be resolved only at the multilateral level, with all the players carrying out their roles diligently. For that reason, Zambia supports a strong and coherent United Nations. We agree with the recommendation of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence that the United Nations urgently needs more coherence and synergy. That will enable it to perform as one and to use its unique universality, neutrality and capacity to operate efficiently.

Furthermore, Zambia supports the ongoing reforms of the United Nations. In particular, we welcome the mandate given to the Economic and Social Council to make it more effective in executing its duties, which include formulating policy recommendations on international and social issues, as well as coordinating activities of specialized agencies in the economic, social and related fields. In that regard, collaboration of the United Nations with the international financial institutions and the World Trade Organization should be further enhanced; we welcome the work going on in this area.

This brings me to another issue: reform of the Security Council. This matter has remained unresolved for more than a decade. United Nations reform cannot be complete without meaningful reform of the Security Council. Any new proposals to reform that vital organ should seriously consider Africa's call to have two permanent seats with full veto power. Africa is aware that the veto is an undemocratic instrument and would prefer to do away with it altogether. However, as long as others insist on keeping the veto, Africa should have it as well. The status quo is unacceptable. It is my hope that during Mr. Kerim's tenure of office, this aspect of the reform process will be concluded successfully.

The issue of climate change is very important to the current and future inhabitants of our planet. It is therefore fitting that one theme of this session is responding to climate change. I commend the Secretary-General for organizing the 24 September 2007 high-level event on this matter. Indeed, the effects of climate change are being felt mostly by the developing countries. For instance, Southern Africa is experiencing critical food shortages due to torrential

rains in some areas and severe drought in other parts of the region.

The problem of climate change is a global issue requiring global action within the multilateral context of the United Nations. As a signatory to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, Zambia has already taken several measures to implement those international instruments. In that regard, we submitted our first national communication report in 2004. We have also taken deliberate steps to create public awareness about the problem of climate change so that our people can devise appropriate local interventions.

Regarding measures aimed at adapting to climate change, Zambia has just finished formulating its National Adaptation Programme of Action. The programme will help us identify the most vulnerable sectors of our economy, as well as adaptation activities required to alleviate the adverse effects of climate change. For this reason, we call upon the international community to ensure that the Adaptation Fund under the Climate Change Convention, which has taken rather long to establish, is made operational.

While placing emphasis on adaptation, we also pledge to reduce emissions from industrial and other sources. We call upon industrialized countries, which have a history of producing these emissions, to take serious steps to reduce them. We believe that the situation is now serious and that narrow national interests in this matter must be discarded forthwith.

As a developing country, Zambia needs assistance to enhance its capacity in key adaptive areas, such as scientific research, early warning and rapid response, to address the adverse effects of climate change. Accordingly, Zambia calls for the speedy development and transfer of appropriate technologies to help us cope with the negative impacts of climate change, as well as to put us on a low-carbon path to economic growth. We also call for a more comprehensive institutional framework for international environmental governance.

In 2000, the developing world embraced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a comprehensive strategy to move our countries out of economic and social decline and better integrate us into the global economy. Halfway through the implementation period, many countries are far from attaining most of the Goals. That is so in spite of the improved economic performance recorded by some developing countries following recent debt relief initiatives, coupled with sustained prudent economic management.

To illustrate the point, in Zambia the economy grew by 6.2 per cent last year, and inflation declined to a single digit level for the first time in 30 years. Those economic gains, however, have not translated into a significant decline in the incidence of poverty, which stands at 68 per cent. Zambia's development efforts are further compromised by the HIV/AIDS pandemic and, now, the adverse effects of climate change.

With regard to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, my Government has declared it to be a national crisis, requiring sustained mitigation and preventive measures. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our cooperating partners for their support to Zambia in the fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

Despite these challenges, Zambia, for its part, has made steady progress and is likely to meet most of the MDGs by 2015. The Goals most likely not to be attained by 2015 are: reducing by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio, integrating the principles of sustainable development into the country's policies and programmes and reversing the loss of environmental resources. Our goal now is to translate the economic achievements into tangible improvements in the quality of life of the Zambian people. That goal is enshrined in Zambia's Vision 2030, which is aimed at raising the country to middle-income status, significantly reducing hunger and poverty and fostering a competitive and outward-oriented economy.

But that goal will remain elusive if our cooperating partners do not fulfil their commitments. Indeed, it is saddening to note that total official development assistance declined in real terms by 5.1 per cent between 2005 and 2006, and only five donor countries have met or exceeded the 0.7 per cent target. I urge the cooperating partners to fulfil their commitments. Furthermore, while Zambia welcomes the discussions and progress made on aid effectiveness following the Paris Declaration, we call for official development assistance to be delivered in a more efficient manner, in accordance with the Declaration.

Aid cannot be effective unless corruption is uprooted. My Government has, therefore, declared war against that social vice. Accordingly, I take this opportunity to urge the international community to

desist from providing safe havens for leaders who plunder national resources. Such ill-gotten wealth should be returned to the countries from where it was misappropriated so that it can be used to fight poverty.

Zambia condemns international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. For this reason, we call upon members of the international community to refrain from harbouring terrorists. Zambia, for its part, supports the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism.

Through regional bodies, such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC), developing countries enhance their ability to cooperate and also jointly negotiate for better access to developed countries' markets. Consequently, during Zambia's current chairmanship of SADC, we shall continue to consolidate the formation of the SADC free trade area by 2008 as a prerequisite to the Regional Customs Union. In addition, Zambia will, on behalf of SADC, seek funding to develop an adequate regional transboundary infrastructure in support of much-needed connectivity in areas such as water, transport, energy, communications and information technology.

Many regions, including Africa, have been dogged by conflict. This has adversely affected the countries' potential to participate in the global economic arena. In the quest for peace in our subregion, SADC has launched a stand-by brigade, which will have the capacity for peace support operations. It is our hope that the international community will render necessary support to the brigade to enable it to fulfil its mandate.

Better still, SADC and Zambia value the tenets of democracy, political stability and integrated economic development as the ultimate sound basis for peace and stability. SADC will, therefore, continue to promote the conducting of free and fair elections in the region.

Mr. Berdymukhammedov (Turkmenistan), Vice-President, took the Chair

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm, with regard to the theme of this session, Zambia's commitment to cooperate with the international community in addressing the problem of climate change. It is my sincere hope that all of us will play our full part, according to our abilities to deal with this serious global challenge. To that end, we should not remain indecisive and indifferent to this serious issue. Neither should we miss the opportunity to do what we can to make the world a better place to live in.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President and Minister of Defence for the Republic of Zambia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Levy Patrick Mwanawasa, President of the Republic of Zambia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Elias Antonio Saca Gonzalez, President of the Republic of El Salvador

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of El Salvador.

Mr. Antonio Saca Gonzalez, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Elias Antonio Saca Gonzalez, President of the Republic of El Salvador, and invite him to address the Assembly.

President Saca Gonzalez (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the people and Government of El Salvador, I would like to extend the most sincere congratulations to Mr. Kerim on his being unanimously elected to preside over this session and to wish him every success in fulfilling his mandate. At the same time, I would like to express our appreciation of the dynamic work done by the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General and call on them to continue to make every effort to strengthen the United Nations.

Allow me to express once more our gratitude for the important role played by the Organization, in particular its contribution to conflict resolution and to economic and social development, as so successfully exemplified in the peace process in Central America, based on the 1987 Esquipulas II Agreement. Recently, Central American countries celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the signing of that Agreement which set in motion the process of establishing a firm and lasting peace in Central America with a view to achieving, through dialogue, a peaceful solution to the Central

American crisis and promoting peacebuilding and democratization in the region.

Following a long process of transition from war to peace, from peace to democracy and to freedom, we are now focusing our efforts on the implementation of an economic and social development model that is just and equitable. In particular, we are promoting an integration process that will allow us to strengthen our capabilities and combine resources to more efficiently tackle and thus benefit from the process of opening up to world trade.

In this context, I would like to mention, in particular, a regional issue that has attracted the attention of the international community and that was referred to yesterday in the media, namely, the Gulf of Fonseca. As President of El Salvador, I wish to inform you that I have submitted a formal initiative to the brother States of Honduras and Nicaragua in order to develop a frank and sincere dialogue with a view to ushering in a new era of cooperation in this area in order to truly establish a joint ownership regime and thereby facilitate the overall and sustainable development of the Gulf Zone for all its inhabitants. That proposal, made yesterday, was well received by the leaders of Honduras and Nicaragua. The three States should begin a new era of collaboration and cooperation in order to tackle and fully resolve issues related to the Gulf. We should not leave any problem in the Gulf of Fonseca unresolved, whether it be by a three-nation or a two-nation approach.

A topic of special interest for my country is international migration, in view of its positive impact on countries of origin and destination alike, and, in particular, because of the significant contributions immigrants make to the economy. Our Government is making efforts for Salvadorians who have emigrated, supporting them through our Embassies and Consulates. In this respect, we greatly appreciate the agreements and recommendations emanating from the United Nations High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development, which reiterated the necessity of fully respecting the human rights of migrants and their families, who must be a central concern of internal and external immigration policy of States, including transit States.

I am pleased to confirm that the efforts I have made in favour of Salvadorian immigrants, especially in the United States, have yielded positive results such as the extension of the Temporary Protected States (TPS) programme, which guarantees work permits and the opportunity to reside in that country with no risk of being deported. Those efforts demonstrate my firm will to continue spearheading initiatives and efforts in order to stabilize migration for all of our fellow citizens.

In the Central American region, we have made significant progress in different areas, but unfortunately, long-standing and emerging threats could still affect the security of our citizens and the stability of our countries. It is therefore essential to unite our efforts to frame suitable national, regional and international policies.

Currently, in most of our countries, as well as in the United States and Mexico, citizens are noting that one of the greatest threats to democracy and economic and social development springs from the activities of gangs, generating a wave of violence and crime in an open challenge to the established order. Those anti-social groups do not conform to the patterns of traditional or ordinary crime, but gradually evolve into more sophisticated forms of organized crime whose manifestations can also be seen in countries outside the continent. Many countries represented here are not as yet faced with this threat. However, the criminal activities of such groups are expanding, both substantively and quantitatively, as is actually apparent and thus the treatment of this issue requires action and cooperation of all States, especially in Latin America. As for El Salvador, we are making efforts that have led to the reduction of crime and homicide perpetuated by such groups through joint actions involving our public security authorities, the judicial system and the legislative authority. At the same time, we are coordinating efforts and adopting measures within the framework of security policies for Central America.

We have to strengthen global cooperation in the fight against terrorism, which is one of the greatest threats to peace and international security. The recent thwarted terrorist attacks in European countries and the repeated threats by extremist groups to continue with their terrorist actions in different parts of the world are a grave threat and danger looming over our society. Consequently, we welcome the efforts of Member States of the United Nations to adopt a global counter-terrorism strategy, giving particular importance to preventing and combating terrorism on a unified, coherent and coordinated basis.

The Middle East is a region in which nations have developed different missions and supported initiatives for a just and lasting solution to the problem, while the United Nations itself has made undoubted efforts to that end, which, unfortunately, have not been successful.

We support any initiative or effort to redirect the peace process. In particular, we welcome the initiative to convene an international peace conference for the Middle East in November. That initiative is a source of renewed hope for achieving the long-awaited peace that will allow all peoples of the region to live free from fear, violence and destruction. It would also establish an environment conducive to political cooperation and to shared economic and social development. We recognize the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, as well as Israel's right to live within secure and internationally recognized borders, so that both peoples can live in peace.

Taiwan is a unique political reality in the international community. It has systematically developed, in particular in recent years, under the leadership of President Chen Shui-bian. He has made his country a modern, peaceful entity that is resolutely determined to promote peace and international cooperation. Given that reality, we acknowledge the legitimate right of more than 23 million Taiwanese to determine their own future, just as other peoples have done. That is why we support the initiative to have the General Assembly review the case of Taiwan in the light of current global realities, acknowledging the right of the Taiwanese to hold a referendum on joining this international Organization.

El Salvador will continue to play an active role in the reform process of the United Nations, which, we reiterate, should be comprehensive. In that regard, since States are responsible for complying with the objectives of the Charter, we must strive not only to achieve consensus and move towards Security Council reform, but also to revitalize the General Assembly and thoroughly revise the mandate of the Economic and Social Council.

The current economic situation has improved for some developing countries that have achieved acceptable rates of growth. However, international instability in prices, commodities and raw materials — in particular the high prices for petroleum — is having a negative impact on our development efforts. Indeed, global economic short- and mid-term imbalances must be anticipated and prevented, and require the coordination of international macroeconomic policy involving developed and underdeveloped countries.

In an effort to review the criteria and conditions for the extension of international cooperation, the first Intergovernmental Conference on Middle-Income Countries took place in Madrid on 1 and 2 March. At the Conference, we identified several areas for strategic action that could guide the efforts of international donors to contribute to the development of that group of countries. We thank the Government of Spain for its readiness to host the event and for the meeting's success. We also express our gratitude to King Abdullah II of Jordan and his Government for convening the summit of the Group of Eleven in May, and in particular for the recommendation that resulted from that forum.

Next October, my country, El Salvador, will host the second International Conference on Development Cooperation with Middle-Income Countries in order to further study international measures allowing us to meet the Millennium Development Goals. We believe that donor countries and international financial organizations should reassess their development cooperation policies with the principal aim of encouraging those countries which are responsibly implementing transparent growth strategies that are adequately endowed in terms of finance management and of the quality and impact of projects. To the middle-income countries and the entire cooperating community, including international financial organizations, I reiterate here our cordial invitation to join us in the important event to take place in San Salvador in October.

With respect to development, I would stress that, in the past 10 years, my country has reduced the level of overall poverty from 65 per cent to 30 per cent. One of my Government's priorities is and will continue to be fighting extreme poverty, towards which we are implementing a series of substantive social programmes. One of the most important of those is the Solidarity Network, through which we directly support families living in extreme poverty, mainly in the rural areas, by granting health and education subsidies and by providing infrastructure, basic services and opportunities to enter the labour market through, inter alia, the provision of microcredit. We have also established a special health fund through which we

have increased basic health care for the most vulnerable sectors of the population, seeking to benefit more than 4 million people through comprehensive programmes to include prevention and the promotion of health education campaigns.

While we acknowledge that progress has been achieved and efforts made to improve the living standards of the most vulnerable sectors of the country, we must continue to enjoy international bilateral and multilateral cooperation if we are to achieve higher levels of well-being. Our Government is convinced that the social sphere is not complementary to anything else, but the basis of everything.

One of the most disturbing challenges to the present and future of the international community is global warming. In particular, as we learn in the impressive report prepared by the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the harmful effects of climate change on all peoples have grown alarming in their human, material, economic and environmental impacts, which are increasingly being felt in countries and regions throughout the world. All States must speedily and fully adopt corrective measures in order substantially to reduce greenhouse gas emissions so as to halt the trend towards irreversible and massive environmental degradation. To that end, we urge developed countries to join in the efforts to curb that trend with responsibility and in a common but differentiated manner.

Alongside international efforts for environmental protection, the countries of Latin America, including those of Central America, Mexico and Colombia, members of the Puebla-Panama Plan, are undertaking measures and coordinating regional and subregional activities in the field of renewable and sustainable energy as alternatives to fossil fuels. Concerned by the instability of international hydrocarbon fuel prices, at the previous session of the General Assembly we proposed that the topic be included on the agenda because of its impact on economic development, in particular in developing countries. In the current situation of ever-spiralling high prices, we reiterate that proposal. We have been increasingly diverting precious economic resources that could, in other circumstances, be directed towards other programmes essential to our countries' human development.

That is why, at this global forum, we appeal to the oil-producing countries to seek, on the basis of international cooperation and solidarity, to implement flexible mechanisms to prevent hydrocarbon fuel prices from drastically impacting developing countries. We in the United Nations cannot ignore that issue, because countries that depend on oil could be bankrupted in the coming years.

I must mention that, faced with high oil prices, we are promoting several initiatives in El Salvador in the area of alternative and renewable energy, such as biofuels. One of those initiatives has led to the formulation of a bill on incentives for investing in renewable energy. We also analysed the economic and technical feasibility of introducing a plan to produce ethanol on a national scale. That is in addition to stepping up thermal energy, which in El Salvador already represents 23 per cent of energy consumption with the entry into operation of the new plant in the eastern part of El Salvador. Similarly, we are beginning technical and financial feasibility studies to promote the production of biodiesel through the establishment of a pilot plant and the use of different crops, which will make it possible to promote reforestation and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, relying for this on the direct support of the United States, Brazil and Colombia.

We believe that Latin American and other developing countries could contribute substantively to global environmental conservation efforts. But efforts will be limited if industrialized countries do not fully assume their responsibilities when it comes to the environment.

Lastly, I would like to recall that we are all representatives of our respective countries and they are the ones that we must serve and protect from the threats that we face. We are convinced that the future of humanity will depend on the decisions and actions that we will adopt here and that we will implement in areas of common global interest. We have the responsibility and obligation to act, and this we must do in order to avert a problem of uncontrollable proportions.

We must understand that the future of humanity will depend on the decisions and actions that we adopt today, but I would like to strongly emphasize that people reach development as a result of perseverance, order, work, discipline and long-term vision. The transformation process and the progress that has been achieved in economic and social policy in the

democratic institutions of my country are the result of the exercise of freedoms. Progress is built and gains momentum when people work hard, persevere and have full freedom, which makes it possible to move towards the implementation of the greatest dream that people have: to enjoy progress and social peace.

I invite the Assembly to combine their efforts to consolidate freedoms in those countries that already enjoy them and to return freedoms to countries that do not have them or have lost them. Let us remember that the dearest freedom is the one that we do not have, that liberty is not missed until we lose it. Without freedom, there is no economic and social progress. We must work every day for freedoms that are threatened by extreme radicalism or populist demagoguery, the seeds that destroy freedom. God bless the world.

The Acting President (*spoke in Russian*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of El Salvador for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Elías Antonio Saca González, President of the Republic of El Salvador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Ms. Bethel (Bahamas), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Address by Mr. Festus G. Mogae, President of the Republic of Botswana

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Botswana.

Mr. Festus G. Mogae, President of the Republic of Botswana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome Mr. Festus G. Mogae, President of the Republic of Botswana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mogae: Many speakers before me have eloquently debated the theme for this session. I am delighted that no one disputes the evidence that science presents to us concerning climate change. Today we meet in this Hall as neighbours and residents of this one planet earth. We are bound together by our common humanity and shared future. We have within us the capacity to act resolutely to save our planet, and now is the time. We cannot afford to squander any more opportunities, for tomorrow might be too late.

William Shakespeare instructs us, in his famous work, Julius Caesar, that:

> "There is a tide in the affairs of men,
> Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
> Omitted, all the voyage of their life
> Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
> On such a full sea are we now afloat;
> And we must take the current when it serves,
> Or lose our ventures."

We are convinced that we should focus on working together to save our planet from the increasing threat of global warming and all its attendant consequences. When we meet as the peoples of the world, we must of necessity remind ourselves of the original and higher purpose of the United Nations. Many of the global challenges we face persist, not because they are insurmountable, but because we have fallen short of the commitments and obligations freely entered into under the Charter.

We, the peoples of the earth, have the human and cultural resources and technology to end severe global poverty and disease, reverse climate change, prevent wars and alleviate human suffering. Unfortunately, substantial resources continue to be wasted on destructive endeavours rather than constructive work. We squander valuable assets in the production of weapons of war and mass destruction rather than development.

The world would be a much better place if the natural resources on this planet were exploited to feed, clothe, educate, care for the sick, prevent diseases and build communities. Young men and women should grow up looking forward to doing extraordinary things to advance the cause of economic and social progress and not spending precious time manufacturing bombs and weapons of war or planning how to kill other human beings.

It is deeply regrettable that nations continue to give higher priority to the narrow pursuit of national interests than to cooperation for the common good and mutual benefit. This emphasis on rivalry breeds injustice, intolerance, extremism and aggression. We must remind ourselves that all of us are the people of this earth and no other. We are bound by our common humanity. We must rise to the challenge of the

founders of this unique universal Organization, so that we may live for our respective countries rather than die for them and together build a more just and equitable future for us all.

The United Nations has touched the lives of the vast majority of our fellow human beings. We therefore reaffirm our abiding faith in its efficacy and usefulness in addressing global issues. The Organization embodies our hope and aspirations for peace, security, respect for human rights and development; in one word, a better life for all. In that respect, the search for consensus in all aspects of United Nations reform must of necessity continue in a fair, just and balanced manner.

From 51 Member States in 1945 to 192 in 2007, the United Nations has grown in diversity and universality. It has also spread and consolidated its legitimacy and authority throughout the world. The United Nations is the centre for harmonizing the actions of nations towards the attainment of the common good. Its strength lies in its unparalleled legitimacy. Without the United Nations, States, both large and small, would encounter many formidable challenges.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that for this Organization to live up to its mandate and to people's expectations, it has to constantly reform itself to respond to contemporary global challenges and realities. In his inspiring and visionary statement at the closing of the San Francisco Conference 62 years ago, President Harry Truman of the United States proffered timeless wise counsel when he said,

> "This Charter, like our own Constitution, will be expanded and improved as time goes on. No one claims that it is now a final or a perfect instrument. It has not been poured into a fixed mold. Changing world conditions will require readjustments — but they will be the readjustments of peace and not of war." (*United Nations Conference on International Organization, Documents, Vol. I, 680 (26 June 1945)*)

Those visionary words of one of the founding fathers of the United Nations should guide us in dealing with United Nations reform. We call upon the original signatories of the United Nations Charter and, in particular the permanent members of the Security Council, to assume greater leadership in the search for consensus and compromise on the reform of the United Nations Security Council. They should be more flexible in responding to proposals put forward on the reforms of the Security Council.

As nation States we are encouraged to build sound democratic institutions. It is imperative, therefore, that the principle of fairer, more inclusive, participatory and accountable institutions should be extended to global governance. In that respect, it should be perfectly understandable why a substantial number of Member States consider it not only necessary, but also long overdue, to increase membership of the Council in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. Today, important matters of international peace and security cannot be resolved through the monopoly of fire power. It requires greater participation and collaboration of nations — large and small.

Botswana recognizes that we cannot all be members of the Security Council. There are those among us who have the capacity to carry the daunting responsibilities of permanent membership. That is why it should be possible for us to reach consensus in making "readjustments of peace and not of war". An all-or-nothing approach is not in our best interest. Botswana strongly supports the search for a compromise on that long-standing issue, which if left unresolved can only become an unnecessary distraction to other equally pressing priorities.

Conflicts in Africa cause the loss of hundreds of thousands of innocent lives. Many people are driven into abject poverty and exposed to disease due to the massive displacement of populations and destruction of their productive capacity. Huge amounts of resources are annually allocated to the United Nations peacekeeping budget to resolve conflicts. Even more resources are needed for the care and upkeep of refugees and displaced peoples.

The situation in Darfur continues to cause concern. Concerted efforts are needed to bring that conflict to an end. In this respect, we welcome the Security Council decision to deploy a peacekeeping mission in Darfur and call upon our brothers and sisters in the Sudan to work together to find a lasting political settlement.

Botswana is concerned about the situation in Chad and the Central African Republic. The loss of civilian lives is intolerable. We call upon Chad, the Central African Republic and other parties to those

conflicts to commit to a peaceful political process to avert further loss of lives. It is clear that the resolution of conflict in that region will require closer cooperation, collaboration and partnership between and among those countries involved in conflict situations.

Following elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo we are hopeful the country is on the road to recovery. It is important for the international community to continue to support the Democratic Republic of the Congo in its post-conflict reconstruction and development efforts. The marauding lawless militias that continue to undermine the peace process should be left in no doubt that anarchy will not be tolerated.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo and the countries of the Great Lakes region of Africa will for the foreseeable future require the assured support and partnership of the international community, not only in peacebuilding but more importantly, in the prevention of conflicts.

Botswana acknowledges the existence of those problems, not because we consider the future of Africa to be hopeless or bleak. We do so in order to arrive at a correct diagnosis of the illnesses and hence the prescription of the right remedy.

The African Union is playing a pivotal role in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts on the continent. While the United Nations Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, Africa should be a dependable and indispensable partner in responding expeditiously to the urgent need to end the conflicts and save lives.

The countries and peoples of Africa should recognize that the primary responsibility for durable peace and social and economic development lies with them. In that respect, we should adopt sound policies and programmes that promote economic growth and development, foreign direct investment as well as domestic investment.

Indeed we are witnessing significant economic growth in Africa. The latest International Monetary Fund projections are that, in 2007 the African economy is expected to grow by six per cent, just below the seven per cent per annum target of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, that is necessary to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

We look to our development partners to deliver on the pledges to scale up official development assistance to Africa, effect meaningful debt relief, improve market access for African goods and services and encourage their private sectors to invest in Africa.

In the year 2000, at the dawn of the new millennium, we convened in these hallowed halls to chart a new path for the United Nations development agenda. We adopted the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals. We undertook to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, promote gender equality as well as to combat HIV and AIDS.

The Millennium Summit followed many global conferences of the 1990s at which we made numerous commitments to combat poverty and underdevelopment. The outcomes of these United Nations conferences and summits provide a veritable template for addressing the debilitating scourge of poverty, disease, hunger and underdevelopment in the world.

Today, as we meet here seven years after the adoption of the Millennium Declaration and half way to 2015, we should pause and take serious stock of the progress made or the lack of it. It is evident that, while other regions of the world are making progress towards the realization of the MDGs, indications are that unless something is done to support Africa, the continent is unlikely to achieve any of the Goals by 2015. Statistics tell tales of a continent that is host to huge numbers of the poor and the hungry. Diseases, in particular HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, still kill many people in Africa. Those factors require an urgent response, as they create conditions that pose a threat to peace, stability and security.

In this interdependent world, the United Nations cannot realistically hope to achieve the MDGs by 2015 if one part of humanity is lagging so far behind. Something must be done to assist and support Africa. In March 2002 at Monterrey, Mexico, we recognized the imperative of global cooperation and partnership in the achievement of internationally agreed development goals. We agreed that

> "achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, demands a new partnership between developed and developing countries" (*resolution 58/130, para. 11*).

Let us honour our commitments and move forward.

Let me conclude by reiterating the fact that Botswana has long recognized that sustainable development has to be a nationally owned and led process that requires sound democratic institutions and prudent economic management. Adherence to those principles, coupled with the exploitation of mineral resources and donor support, enabled us to achieve rapid economic growth and some measure of development.

Continued assistance is necessary to enable us to consolidate the gains of the past few years and ensure sustainable development. In that respect, the scope of development cooperation should include private sector development, private investment and access to technology. Assistance to middle-income countries such as Botswana is crucial and in the long-term interest of the global economy. We are asking not for handouts, but for assured support, partnership and collaboration.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Botswana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Festus Mogae, President of the Republic of Botswana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. René Garcia Préval, President of the Republic of Haiti

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Haiti.

Mr. René Garcia Préval, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. René Garcia Préval, President of the Republic of Haiti, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Préval (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate Mr. Kerim on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. There is no doubt that his deep familiarity with the academic world, tied to his experience in the political world and in business, is a major asset that will help him to lead us confidently in the Assembly's work. I sincerely hope that our debates will be fruitful and lead to the adoption of relevant resolutions.

Allow me also to welcome our new Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, who recently honoured us with his first visit to Haiti in August. We are firmly convinced that the new Secretary-General will rapidly bring to bear his experience of the United Nations system, his vast learning and his broad open-mindedness in carrying out the reforms that most Members of our Organization know to be necessary.

Despite its difficulties, our Organization remains the principal forum offering all States, large and small, the same space for dialogue to address the fundamental issues surrounding our coexistence and future on this planet. May the Secretary-General be assured of the support of the Haitians in his efforts to increase the effectiveness of the United Nations and to enable it to achieve its full potential.

I am speaking here on behalf of a people that has endured great suffering over the past 200 years: material deprivation of all sorts, vulnerability to natural threats and disasters, poor access to health care and education, the deaths of hundreds of thousands of children from malnutrition, and a very young population — 65 per cent below the age of 25 — denied any true opportunity for employment.

I speak on behalf of a people that seems to be depopulating itself as its most competent professionals forsake a life of difficulties to the benefit of other countries or businesses, and as its children, women and senior citizens, weary of living what seems to be a hopeless existence, take to the open seas on makeshift boats, seeking a better life under other skies.

I speak on behalf of a State whose neighbours, including the most powerful among them, sometimes portray it as a threat to regional security because Haiti appears too frequently on the agenda of the General Assembly or the Security Council, with a burdensome array of problems of insecurity or political unrest.

I speak on behalf of a country that analyses somewhat prematurely describe as a failed State because it has trouble making its institutions operational and organizing a way of life appropriate to the majority of its citizens, and because the State itself,

unfortunately, often finds itself waging an endless war against its own children.

Haiti is on the way to bidding farewell to that State — slowly, patiently, yet resolutely. The organized armed gangs responsible for violence against innocent people have been dismantled and there is no longer any forbidden zone for peaceful citizens anywhere on our territory.

The management of our economy has improved considerably. We have stopped printing money. That has reduced the inflation rate — which had run rampant for several years and which just a few months ago reached 40 per cent — to less than 10 per cent. Our gross domestic product has seen moderate but sustained growth, after having been negative for more than 10 years.

We have worked patiently to establish an atmosphere of calm and collegiality within the political class, which is a condition essential for enabling the political forces to put an end to their perpetual factional disputes and to mobilize around genuine national reconstruction plans.

The Security Council will soon extend the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) for another year. Such an extension would be most appropriate. This reminds us that our victory over insecurity, the holding of democratic elections, the improvement of governance in the country and the strengthening of our judicial system were possible thanks in large part to the efforts of United Nations forces within the framework of the Organization's peacekeeping programme. Certainly, the members of our national police, although young, inexperienced and underequipped, have proved to be courageous and determined in the fight against insecurity, but MINUSTAH's support at their side has been greatly appreciated. Let me take this opportunity to express once again our thanks to the Organization, to the Security Council and to the friendly countries that mobilized their own resources and citizens to come to the assistance of Haitians at this difficult time in their history.

Haitians, recalling that they belong to a people who fought for their freedom and carried the torch of liberty to many other shores of the continent, continue to see the presence of foreign armed forces on their soil as a wound to their national sovereignty. Practically speaking, however, that is the only realistic formula currently available that is enabling Haitians to regain freedom and live in peace.

It is now up to Haitians to benefit from this period of calm by pulling themselves together, reconsidering their fate with a positive vision of the future and returning to daily life as a disciplined, hardworking and law-abiding people while our State strengthens its internal cohesion, modernizes its judicial system and improves its governance and its capacity to intervene, so that it can create and maintain an environment conducive to economic recovery and genuine sustainable development.

The adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was an act of awareness. Nevertheless, halfway towards the deadline set for achievement of the Goals, it seems clear that many of us — including my country — will not meet the 2015 targets, despite the considerable progress made in various areas. Mobilizing resources to support the pursuit of the MDGs is a difficult but essential task. It is not only necessary for ethical reasons or because the international community must honour its commitments. Problems that cannot be resolved in a poor State will spill over to richer States, which will thus be forced to revisit problems that they had already overcome by themselves at the national level.

The General Assembly has included in the agenda for the present session an item relating to cooperation in combating the activities of transnational organized crime. In that connection, I should like to highlight my country's efforts to fight against corruption and illicit drug trafficking. In Haiti, we are currently developing ways to deal with corruption. We have begun to work to strengthen State structures and to plan legal and regulatory reforms to be established to ensure that that endemic evil disappears from our institutional practices, both in politics and in business.

But the fight against drug trafficking is of another scale entirely, because it sets us squarely against sophisticated and well-organized adversaries who have access to powerful international networks in both drug-producing and drug-consuming countries. We are sensitive to the human suffering and social upheaval attributable to drug abuse, and we are aware of the efforts being made to treat and rehabilitate addicts, primarily in the major drug-consuming countries. However, trafficking also has harmful effects on the economic, social and political structures of small States

such as mine and poses a serious threat to their sovereignty and security, even if they are only transit States. The approach that has emerged from various international conferences focuses on prevention and demand-reduction in consumer countries first and then to reduce supply in producing countries and suppress trafficking networks.

Haiti and the Dominican Republic are on the traffic route of one of the most intense flows between the producer countries of South America and the consumer countries of North America. We are firmly committed to helping the countries of the North eliminate the drugs that arrive in their countries by way of our territory as a place of transit. But we cannot deal with this scourge alone, and our efforts to improve the monitoring of our land, sea and air borders and strengthen our institutions come up against the power of the networks put in place by the traffickers.

The solutions developed to deal with these problems will clearly yield no results if we do not urgently address the issue of economic development, because, as has been eloquently stated in reports of the Secretary-General, development is another name for peace.

It follows from that observation that we need a new culture of international solidarity based on a comprehensive and coordinated approach in which the fight against poverty goes hand in hand with sustainable development. It is an approach in which development assistance and the fight against insecurity are supported by the efforts of more developed countries to open up their markets, to encourage flows of foreign direct investment and technology transfers and to support the private sector and entrepreneurial initiatives: a comprehensive approach in which rich and poor understand that they are co-owners of this planet and that its fate is in all our hands.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Haiti for the statement he has just made.

Mr. René Préval, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Laurent Gbagbo, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Laurent Gbagbo, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Laurent Gbagbo, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Gbagbo (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, on the quality of the intensive work done in such a short period of time at the head of the United Nations. I would like to congratulate him sincerely and to encourage him on his correct assessment of the world's present problems.

This is the first time that I am taking part in the General Assembly in my seven years at the head of Côte d'Ivoire. As members know, I am fully committed to resolving the crisis gripping my country and which has so mobilized the international community over the past five years. My presence, today, here in New York, at this rostrum, is the best proof of the climate of calm prevailing in Côte d'Ivoire today, following the signing of the Ouagadougou political agreement, which was the outcome of direct dialogue between the State and the former rebels.

That agreement was endorsed by the Security Council which unanimously adopted resolution 1765 (2007). On behalf of the people of Côte d'Ivoire, I wish to thank and to greet all who were involved in these positive developments: the countries members of the Security Council, the countries members of the African Union Peace and Security Council, all the countries of the African Union and the countries members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In particular, I thank the heads of State whose personal involvement was key in resolving the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire: President Thabo Mbeki, mediator in the Ivorian crisis appointed by the African Union, and President Blaise Compaoré, facilitator for the direct inter-Ivorian dialogue, as current Chairman of ECOWAS.

We have noted that despite the international community's efforts over the previous four years, the peace process was blocked and the country was at a standstill. That is why, on 19 December 2006, I suggested to my compatriots a way out of the crisis, focusing on five points: first, the establishment of direct dialogue with the rebels, aimed at disarmament and the reunification of the country; secondly, the removal of the Zone of Confidence; thirdly, the establishment of a national service programme; fourthly, a general amnesty; and finally, the establishment of an assistance programme for the return of persons displaced by the war. That plan was based on the experience of solutions considered up until then, but with a completely different approach, in order to ensure complete ownership of the peace process by the Ivorians themselves.

I thus took up direct dialogue with the rebels. Our discussions, through the facilitation of President Blaise Compaoré, took place in neighbouring Burkina Faso, the West African country with the closest historical and sociological ties with Côte d'Ivoire. Those discussions led to the signing on 4 March 2007 of the Ouagadougou political agreement.

In accordance with that agreement, a new Government was established. It is headed by the former rebel leader, Mr. Guillaume Soro. With this Government, we have made considerable progress in a short period of time. An integrated command centre, bringing together soldiers from the national armed forces and from the former rebel forces, was established on 16 March 2007. Its mission is to set up a joint force entrusted with ensuring security and the free movement of individuals and goods throughout the national territory. A general amnesty order was issued on 11 April 2007. Disarmament effectively began with the 30 July 2007 "peace bonfire" in Bouaké. The redeployment of the administration and reinstatement of magistrates throughout the territory has now taken place. A plan for the return of those displaced by the war has been put in place. Mobile courts to identify members of the population and update electoral lists began yesterday, Tuesday, 25 September 2007. We have made major strides towards peace since the Ouagadougou peace agreement.

The lesson I draw from this experience of direct dialogue between State authorities and the rebels has led me to invite the international community to favour local solutions in the settlement of conflicts. The United Nations in New York should make arrangements to monitor the implementation of solutions adopted by parties to a conflict.

Côte d'Ivoire will emerge from crisis. Côte d'Ivoire is emerging from crisis. Today more than ever, it needs the support of the international community to build peace and stability within its borders and in the West African subregion.

In this context, and given the climate of calm prevailing in the country, I would like the United Nations to revise downward the security rating. Phase III no longer reflects reality.

In the same spirit, with the implementation of the Ouagadougou agreement, today Côte d'Ivoire is reunified and it is now up to the State to restore law and order throughout the territory. The agreement provides explicitly that in the redeployment of administrators, the forces of law and order are to take part in providing protection for administrative staff, as well as for the citizen population. I appeal here for the partial lifting of the weapons embargo so that the Ivorian State can carry out its task of protecting persons and goods.

Moreover, and in the present context of national reconciliation, Ivorians remain concerned that individual sanctions are still imposed on some of our compatriots. Since the Ouagadougou Agreement, those young people have put heart and soul into the search for peace. For that reason I am formally asking the United Nations, within the spirit and letter of the Ouagadougou political Agreement (S/2007/144) endorsed by resolution 1765 (2007) to lift the sanctions imposed on Charles Blé Goudé, Eugène Djué and Martin Kouakou Fofie.

Côte d'Ivoire is a sound country and our management of public finance has made it possible for the Ivorian State to function and to ensure a minimum standard of living for its people. But the ongoing crisis has ultimately led to a reduction in the financial resources available to the State and has disrupted its financial stability.

Today I am asking for assistance to help finance the actions related directly to resolving the crisis, namely: the civil service, mobile courts, general elections, the return of those displaced by war and in general, peacebuilding.

But beyond the short and medium-term actions, Côte d'Ivoire requires international aid to strengthen the basis for a more robust economic recovery in the long-term. We must rebuild and strengthen our community infrastructures. Our schools and health centres were damaged during the war. We must rebuild and strengthen our economic infrastructures — roads, railways, electric and water supply stations were severely strained by the crisis.

All observers and all actors in the crisis in Côte d'Ivoire agree that elections are the goal of the crisis resolution process in Côte d'Ivoire. The holding of transparent, free elections that are open to all is not only a requirement under my political culture, but is, above all a democratic requirement. Elections are proof of good governance. I intend to make my country — Côte d'Ivoire — a modern State — that is, a State in which people appoint their leaders through just and transparent elections.

Democratic elections are a requirement for my country in order to modernize our political life. Elections are also required for our economic recovery. We absolutely must reorganize the coming elections in Côte d'Ivoire and hold them successfully in order to restore confidence among economic actors in the country and abroad.

Elections are a requirement as well for stability in our country and in the subregion. We must organize elections quickly to confer political legitimacy on those who are exercising State power in order to stabilize the society in Côte d'Ivoire and ensure economic recovery in West Africa. Finally, elections are a constitutional imperative. According to our constitution, when exceptional circumstances make it impossible to hold elections — as was the case before the country was reunified — all institutions within the Republic function solely with a view to holding elections. For that reason, the elections must be reorganized quickly so that we can move beyond this constitutional, but exceptional situation.

For all those reasons, from this rostrum at the United Nations I invite all friends of Côte d'Ivoire throughout the world, but also and above all the politicians, both men and women, Ivorians and all peoples living in Côte d'Ivoire to become involved in the peace process. I invite them to become fully invested in the electoral process underway and to contribute, each person according to his or her ability, to national reconciliation and to peacebuilding.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Laurent Gbagbo, President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe.

Mr. Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President de Menezes: Thank you for inviting me to be here today. I bring you greetings from the people of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe. This is my first opportunity to personally congratulate Mr. Ban Ki-moon and to thank him for taking on the huge responsibilities he has assumed as Secretary-General. We offer him our full support for the difficult tasks ahead.

I would also like to congratulate Mr. Srgjan Kerim for his election as President of the current session and to thank Ms. Al Khalifa for her work in guiding the sixty-first session so well.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary-General for the choice of the topics for this session, such as climate change, finance for development, the Millennium Development Goals and countering terrorism.

We come together this year at a time of enormous challenges for the United Nations. The world situation is very serious. One difficulty is that the problems are of such enormous complexity that the mass of facts

presented to the public by the media make it exceedingly difficult for average people to understand the situation.

Many of us in this room today live far from the troubled areas of the earth. So, it is, perhaps, hard to comprehend the plight of long-suffering peoples like those in Afghanistan, Darfur, Iraq, Palestine, Sierra Leone and Somalia, among so many others. But we must reject prejudice and discrimination and end those conflicts.

For those who still ignore our existence, may I remind them that my country, Sao Tome and Principe, is an African nation composed of two islands in the Gulf of Guinea and independent from Portugal since 12 July 1975. So, I wanted to say that we also join the calls to defeat terrorist extremism everywhere. However, we have already seen that this will not be achieved by military force, but by ideas and ideals that win hearts and minds.

Regarding the Millennium Development Goals, I want to express my regret that so little progress has been made towards achieving these worthy ends. How can we ignore those who are to be helped by those Goals, the least, the last and the lost? As the Nobel Laureate Martin Luther King once said,

> "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly".

I join previous speakers in saying that despite all the technological and scientific advances, half of the world's population lives on less than $2 per day. Twenty per cent of everyone alive suffer from chronic hunger. Every single day, 30,000 children die needlessly from dehydration, diarrhoea or infections, which could be all too easily prevented or cured. In many countries, children are not even given a name until they are one month old because so many of them do not live that long. One billion adults today are illiterate; 100 million children cannot go to school because of their poverty.

Now, with regard to how to finance development, we are told that globalization is the way, that a rising tide will lift all boats. But in many parts of the world the rising tide of globalization lifted the yachts and swamped the rowboats. Can private corporations realistically be expected to combine their entrepreneurial activities with furthering social causes? Obviously, some companies must improve their practices and be held accountable for cleaning up their environmental disasters, such as those in the Niger Delta. But to cast companies in the role of economic reformers is unrealistic. It seems that perhaps globalization has made the right to shop more important than the right to vote.

At the same time, we must also be realistic about the results of aid. It seems that international organizations sometimes suffer from poverty of expectations. Our own people in the developing world are also at times crucified on the poverty of their own desires. Instead of raging against our destiny, we have lowered our standards. I think the humiliation of poverty actually scorches the heart and creates despair.

How can we come here year after year and see this despair, disease and hunger and not feel enormous sorrow? We must accept that global poverty is the disgrace of our affluent era. So how do we alleviate poverty? Many say that Africa is poor because of bad governance and corruption. I strongly reject that view. Is it shameful to remember how all of our countries in Africa, all of us, were when we became independent, or how we were even more recently in Sao Tome and Principe.

Let me say a little bit about how it was and how it is in Sao Tome and Principe. The majority of people grew up in wooden shacks, with no running water, no electricity, no toilet and no chance for an education. In 1975, the country emerged from centuries of slavery and oppressive colonialism to independence with almost no teachers, no doctors, totally unprepared to govern ourselves or create an economy that did not depend on slave or contract labour as the only means of profit. We have struggled. We have stumbled. But today we have a vibrant and stable democracy that we are proud of. We have a high percentage of girls in school. We have literacy rates far above the average in the developing world. We have free health care for all of our citizens, although it is woefully inadequate for lack of funds. We have almost eradicated malaria. We have low corruption, while also being rated among the best countries in the world for freedom of the press. We spend almost no money on defence and we have never fought a war.

The President returned to the Chair.

We are grateful for aid. My people would suffer even more than they already do without the World Food Programme, for example. The World Health Organization and the Global Fund to fight tuberculosis and malaria are working with us very well. The Republic of Taiwan, the people of the island of Formosa, with their well-known generosity and special attention to our realities, have been crucial in our own success against malaria. Many organizations and individuals have worked with us for many years with open hearts and generous spirits, and we thank them all for that.

Throughout our 32 years of independence, we have followed the advice of international organizations and built up some $350 million in bilateral and multilateral debt, most of which was recently forgiven under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative and other programmes. Allow me to take this opportunity to present, on behalf of the people of Sao Tome and Principe, our deepest gratitude.

As long as massive poverty, injustice and obscene inequality persist in our world, none of us can rest. I say to all, please do not look the other way. Do not hesitate. The future might say that what we failed to do was tragic, but let me also say that what we did do was truly heroic.

Finally, before ending, and as I have done in prior years, I wish to refer to two situations to which I call the attention of members and implore their solidarity, regardless of whether they are poor or rich.

One of those situations is the issue of Taiwan. There are 23 million people living on Formosa island, also called Taiwan. They do not ask the international community to help them because they are poor. On the contrary, they are one of the main recognized world economic powers, and they are helping other countries, such as Sao Tome and Principe. They only ask to be recognized as a sovereign country and to be included as such on the lists of the United Nations and its agencies. This is a question of justice.

Also a question of justice is the issue of the United States Government lifting the embargo against Cuba, repealing the Helms-Burton Act of 1996 and allowing for free trade and free travel. Let the Cubans settle their problems among themselves. This is a democratic act.

I thank all members for being here today and listening. May God bless us all.

The President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Fradique Bandeira Melo de Menezes, President of the Democratic Republic of Sao Tome and Principe, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by His Excellency Mr. Nuri Kamel Al-Maliki, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq.

Mr. Nuri Kamel Al-Maliki, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: I have pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Nuri Kamel Al-Maliki, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Al-Maliki (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): I am honoured to address the General Assembly as the first Prime Minister of a constitutionally permanent Government representing Iraq, its people, and its aspirations in cementing the foundations of democracy, peace, freedom and cooperation with the international community. I come carrying the concerns of the people of the Valley of Two Rivers who built the most ancient civilization and established the first laws, and who today offer humanity a lofty example in sustaining life, facing challenges, and persisting in protecting our young democratic experience.

The Iraqi people lived isolated from the world in the shadow of dictatorship for 35 years. There was no freedom of expression or belief, no multiple party system, no free elections, no democratic institutions, no communications systems, and no media except those that were controlled by the Government intelligence agencies.

Millions of victims in Iraq suffered throughout that era in adventurous wars with two neighbouring countries, Iran and Kuwait. Genocidal mass murder was committed inside Iraq, such as during the al-Anfaal campaign and in Halabja. In addition, there were mass graves, horrific prison cells and detention camps, and the immense destruction that plagued the infrastructure of the various governmental institutions.

Today in the new Iraq, there are hundreds of parties active within 20 political alliances. There are more than 6,000 civil society organizations, hundreds of newspapers and magazines, 40 local and satellite TV stations, as well as the offices of foreign correspondents from all over the world working without restrictions or conditions.

The new Iraq is being targeted today. Terrorism kills civilians, journalists, artists, intellectuals and professionals; it attacks universities, marketplaces and libraries; it blows up mosques and churches and destroys the infrastructure of State institutions. We consider terrorism to be an extension of the fallen dictatorship, although it may vary in its external form or in the gangs that carry it out. Terrorism seeks to abort the political process and to ignite sectarian strife as a prelude to hijacking Iraq back into the era of tyranny, oppression and backwardness.

Car bombs, explosive vests in public places and the display of decapitated heads on television are all messages of threat and intimidation that terrorists send to the world community, the bloody chapters of which were executed in Algeria, Spain, England, France, Lebanon, Turkey and here in New York. We are steadfast and determined to exterminate and defeat terrorism in Iraq so that it does not spread through the countries of the world, repeating the tragedy.

Iraq, which carries the greater burden in confronting terrorism, calls upon the nations of the world to help and join in its efforts to fight the scourge of terrorism. Our battle aims at providing security, stability and prosperity, and at protecting our democratic experience. We are determined to be victorious in our battle, which will be a victory for humanity. The fierce onslaught of terror against Iraq since the fall of the dictatorship has not stopped our people, through three epic elections, from laying the groundwork for a democratic experience unique in Iraq's history and the region, in which, as a permanent Constitution was voted upon, a parliament was elected and a National Unity Government was established.

The new Iraq living through its nascent democratic experience is governed by constitutional institutions, in which freedom of opinion, belief and expression are respected. That Iraq will not retreat from its democratic option, for which our people have paid a very high price. Our position requires the support and cooperation of the world's nations so that Iraq can build a modern State that guarantees justice, equality and respect for religious, intellectual, sectarian and ethnic pluralism.

Our people, who have enjoyed the taste of freedom after eras of tyranny and oppression, will continue on the road towards building a State of institutions, reinforcing the authority of law, respecting human rights, and the active participation of women in all areas. The national reconciliation and dialogue initiative that I launched upon assuming my responsibility as the Prime Minister of the National Unity Government did not come out of thin air. Its strength arises from the Iraqi people's civilization and cultural heritage, which have made great contributions to humankind. Iraqis have lived in peace, brotherhood, forgiveness and tolerance since the dawn of history. Their religious, national, sectarian and ethnic diversity have been elements of strength, reinforcing national unity.

We think of national reconciliation as a life boat, a perpetual peace project and a safe harbour for the political process and the democratic experience. We also believe that national reconciliation is not the responsibility of the Government alone. It is a collective responsibility held by the political powers, intellectual leaders, religious leaders, the educated, civil society organizations and all the active powers in the Iraqi arena. National reconciliation is the strategic choice that has saved our country from slipping into the pit of a sectarian war that was planned by the enemies of freedom and democracy after they blew up the tomb of the two Askari imams in Samara.

National reconciliation is not a dinner party prepared between those in dispute, nor is it a dose of medicine, as some might think. It is a realistic vision that counteracts the burdensome legacy of the fallen regime in all areas. It lays the foundation for political, social and economic progress and the security that we

strive for. Furthermore, it cements the principles of the new political system.

National reconciliation is the olive branch that blossomed into the formation of support councils in many of our provinces and Iraqi cities. It was also successful in leading some 28,000 citizens from Iraqi tribes to join our military efforts to combat terrorism. It has resulted in the restoration of security in our cities, villages and provinces, including in Al-Anbar province, which has been liberated from the Al-Qaida terrorist organization. The terrorists fled from there, only to face another defeat, this time in Diyala province. Thus, Al-Qaida is losing its safe havens, one by one.

Indeed, national reconciliation is stronger than the weapons of terrorism. It caused the reintegration of more than 14,000 people who had been members of armed groups that splintered off from Al-Qaida. Those fighters stood alongside our armed forces and the multinational forces battling Al-Qaida, dealing devastating blows to that terrorist organization.

The practical accomplishments that have been achieved through constant mobilization for national reconciliation are considered important successes, in contrast to the great challenges facing Iraq and the experiences of people who have suffered from dictatorships and civil and sectarian wars.

We emphasize that the acts of sectarian violence being committed in Iraq are not perpetrated by the main elements of society, but rather by extremists and fanatics belonging to various groups. We have been successful in largely containing this problem. The average number of sectarian killings has decreased and security and stability have been restored in many former hot spots. That has helped the return of thousands of displaced families to their homes. We are resolved to fight any and all outlaws, regardless of their sectarian or political affiliations. Our armed forces have been steadfast in establishing law and order and in instilling a sense of respect for the Government in many provinces whose residents have diverse religious, sectarian and ethnic affiliations.

The skills and capabilities of our security and military agencies have grown swiftly as they have confronted terrorist organizations, militias and organized crime groups. However, they need further training and development so that they can quickly take over from the multinational forces the responsibility for security throughout Iraq. Having proved our ability to provide security in eight provinces, we are prepared to assume full and swift responsibility for security so that we can protect the democratic achievements of our people. We shall work to ensure that our armed forces act in a professional manner and are loyal first and foremost to our country, not to an individual party, sect or ethnicity.

In addition to those achievements, the Government of National Unity has begun the process of reconstruction. We have voted on the largest budget in Iraq's contemporary history. With the cooperation of parliament, we have adopted the investment law, which is considered a step forward that will stimulate the Iraqi economy and move it from a centrally based system to one based on free enterprise and a market economy. That in turn will help to fulfil our people's aspirations to development, prosperity and well-being. In addition, the Government has finalized a draft law for oil and gas, which if approved by parliament will ensure fair distribution of wealth, since oil is considered the property of all Iraqis.

The Government also continues to adopt and implement other laws in various areas. We have taken practical steps to improve our people's living conditions, to increase salaries and pensions, to combat unemployment and to expand the efforts of the social welfare network. The Government is determined that next year will be dedicated to promoting the service sector in order to alleviate the hardships and suffering of our citizens.

We understand that these promising steps do not fulfil all our aspirations and that we have a long way to go until we achieve our goal of a secure, stable and prosperous Iraq. We hope that the international community will support Iraq and help it to achieve that noble goal.

We believe that security is an integrated system. A secure and stable Iraq will be in the best interests of the region and of the world as a whole. We have warned all countries in the region that the relentless flow of weapons, money and suicide bombers and the spreading of fatwas that incite hatred and murder will only spell disaster for the peoples of the region and the entire world.

After the Government of National Unity was formed, we took the initiative to improve Iraq's relationship with neighbouring countries. We also took

pains to make our common borders peaceful and economically prosperous areas. The foreign policy of the new Iraq is based on our permanent Constitution, which does not allow our land to be used against our neighbours and prohibits foreign interference in our internal affairs. Today, we feel optimistic that countries in the region are aware of the danger of the terrorist onslaught against Iraq and that a weak Iraq is not in their interests. A strong and democratic Iraq will be a guarantee of security and stability in the region.

Because of its new policies, Iraq has become a place for negotiations and dialogue between feuding regional and international entities. We will take steps to reinforce that positive role, adopting a policy of improving conditions, defusing crises and banishing the spectre of war and conflict from the region. We firmly believe that tension and instability undermine security not only in Iraq, but throughout the region and the world.

Iraq, which in recent decades has been a hotbed of tension in the region, is now qualified, by virtue of its material and human resources, to serve as a platform for regional and international economic cooperation. That will contribute to the establishment of an economic system that will produce development and prosperity for the peoples and countries of the region.

We also wish to express our sincere desire to establish the best possible relationship with the international community. We believe that Iraq must be open to all countries, developing relationships and benefiting from the experiences of other democracies.

As I stand before leaders and representatives of the world's nations, I must recall that the Iraqi people continue to pay the price for the reckless politics of the previous, fallen regime and to experience the consequences of international resolutions, especially those relating to its weapons programme and its invasion of the brotherly State of Kuwait. Those resolutions, which were exploited by the previous regime for political gain, have caused much damage to our infrastructure, service sector and education and health systems. Our people are looking to the international community for help in repairing that damage and lifting the heavy burdens of debt and reparation.

The Iraqi people will remember the countries that made sacrifices and stood alongside them in bringing down the dictator's regime. They will remember those who helped them during the transition to a democratic and pluralistic federal system. Moreover, they will always respect and appreciate the countries and Governments that support their political process and participate in the reconstruction process.

Our efforts, in partnership with the international community, to achieve economic progress and social justice culminated in success with the signing of the International Compact with Iraq and the implementation of its provisions. That document represents a new stage in the development of balanced relationships between Iraq and other Governments throughout the world. It is a point of departure in the building of a democratic, pluralistic, federal Iraq where all citizens are equal and will benefit from fair distribution of wealth after the burdens of debt, unemployment, and administrative and financial corruption left over from the days of the former regime have been lifted.

We hope that the countries concerned will comply with the provisions of the International Compact with Iraq. That will help the international community and encourage it to play its role in reconstruction and development and in supporting national reconciliation and the democratic experience.

Many of the region's problems and crises can be resolved through constructive and focused dialogue. In order to maintain peace and security, our region must abandon the path of war and adventure, which has led to increased harm and suffering for the people.

Within this framework, we call for recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people, for assistance to them in establishing an independent State, and for the return of occupied Arab lands in accordance with international resolutions. The elimination of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East will indeed guarantee a just and comprehensive peace.

We call for the intensification of national, Arab and international efforts to help Lebanon and its political authorities to transcend the state of division and to bar interference in its internal affairs so that Lebanon can regain its national unity and cohesiveness.

To forge partnerships and to achieve peace, stability and prosperity, we must bolster cooperation among all countries of the world and must work

together to attain the noble goals of the United Nations. This also necessitates ensuring equal and balanced relationships among States and developing a more fair and just global order by helping economically disadvantaged developing countries and reducing the development gap between poor and rich nations.

We support an active United Nations role in the international arena, peacefully resolving crises once it attains all the elements and support that it needs to play that important role. We call upon the United Nations to adopt peaceful initiatives that can help defuse conflicts, save people from the scourge of war and establish international security and stability. That will guarantee the rights and interests of all nations and will reinforce partnerships and cooperation among them. It will also provide the necessary environment for solving the problems and crises that face the world in a fair and just way.

Finally, on behalf of the Iraqi people, I wish to congratulate Mr. Srgjan Kerim, President of the General Assembly at its sixty-second session. I also want to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who played an important role in the United Nations adoption of the International Compact with Iraq to help Iraq carry out its reform programme of political, economic and security reform. My deep appreciation goes also to all countries that signed the Compact.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nuri al-Maliki, Prime Minister of the Republic of Iraq, was escorted from the rostrum.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Felipe Pérez Roque, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, who will also speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Mr. Pérez Roque (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Never before have the real dangers awaiting the human species become so evident; never before have the violations of international law become so evident, as they increasingly jeopardize international peace and security; never before have inequality and exclusion become so evident, as they impact over two thirds of the population on our planet.

Putting an end to wastefulness and to the unbridled consumerism fostered by the large corporations and the power groups of a handful of developed countries — which throw money away at the cost of poverty and the perpetuation of underdevelopment in a vast periphery of poor countries where billions of people scramble to make a living — has become a key factor for the survival of mankind. The high-level meeting of this General Assembly held only two days ago emphasized the danger posed by the accelerated global warming that is already affecting us and by its effect on climate change. Action must be taken — and quickly. The developed countries have the moral duty and the historic responsibility to set the example and spearhead the effort.

On the other hand, several of our countries, always from the South, continue to fall prey to unacceptable acts of aggression by the ever-powerful, which are essentially driven by the insatiable hunger for strategic resources. The wars of conquest and the proclamation and implementation of doctrines based on pre-emptive wars — which do not exclude the use of nuclear weapons, even against non-nuclear States — and the repeated use of pretexts such as the alleged war on terror, the supposed promotion of democracy or so-called regime change in countries that are unilaterally labelled as rogue States are today the greatest and most serious threat to peace and security in the world.

Aggression and illegal occupation of countries, military intervention contrary to international law and the purposes and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter, the bombing of civilians and torture continue to be daily practices. Under the false litany of freedom and democracy, an attempt is made to justify the pillaging of the natural resources in the third world and to control zones of increasing geo-strategic importance. That and no other is the imperial domination plan that the mightiest military superpower ever to exist intends to impose through blood and fire.

Far from behaving in international relations according to the principles of solidarity, social and international justice, equality and development for all, there is no hesitation at all in employing the practices of certifying countries, of imposing unilateral blockades and of threatening through aggression, blackmail and coercion. If a small country defends its right to independence, it is accused of being a rogue State; if a Power launches an attack against a country, it is said that it liberates them; a fighter against foreign aggression is a terrorist; an attacking soldier is a freedom fighter. That is the media war, the twisting of

truths, the tyranny of monolithic thinking in a globalized world.

Instead of moving towards general and complete disarmament — including nuclear disarmament, which has been an ongoing demand of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries for decades — what we see is the promotion of the arms race and the squandering of wealth on new weapons and arms systems that deplete the resources that the world needs to mitigate the effects of climate change and address the very serious problems stemming from poverty and marginalization.

An attempt is made to prevent, in a politicized and selective fashion, the implementation of the principle — already proclaimed in the Non-Proliferation Treaty — that nations have the right to the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. Some countries are threatened with war and destruction while the aggressive ally is permitted to have hundreds of nuclear devices and is constantly helped to modernize them.

How much longer will it take and how many new victims will have to die before the hawks of war understand that weapons are useless in resolving the critical problems of humankind? On a day like today, it is worth recalling the words uttered by President Fidel Castro in this General Assembly in October 1979:

> "Let us say farewell to arms, and let us in a civilized manner dedicate ourselves to the most pressing problems of our times. This is the responsibility, this is the most sacred duty of the statesmen of all the world. Moreover, this is the basic premise for human survival." (*A/34/PV.31, para. 147*)

There has been no progress to date towards fulfilling the Millennium Goals and the decisions of the major United Nations conferences held over the past decade. Poverty has not decreased. Inequality among and within countries is on the rise. Drinking water is not accessible to 1.1 billion people; 2.6 billion lack health services; over 800 million are illiterate and 115 million children do not attend primary school; 850 million starve every day. One per cent of the world's richest people own 40 per cent of the wealth, while 50 per cent of the world's population has barely 1 per cent. All this is happening in a world that spends a trillion dollars on weapons and another trillion on advertising.

The nearly 1 billion people living in developed countries consume approximately half of all the energy, while 2 billion poor people are still not acquainted with electricity. Is that the world that they want us to accept? Is that, by any chance, the future that we should settle for? Are we entitled or not to fight to change that state of things? Should we or should we not fight to make a better world possible?

Why are such colossal resources squandered on the killing industry and not used to save lives? Why are schools not built instead of nuclear submarines, and hospitals instead of "smart" bombs? Why are vaccines not produced instead of armoured vehicles, and more food instead of more fighter jets? Why is there no momentum given to research to fight AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis instead of promoting the manufacture of anti-missile shields? Why is there no war waged against poverty instead of against the poor?

Despite the fact that only $150 billion is needed to meet the Millennium Goals, we hear the hypocritical assertion that there is no source from which to obtain the necessary financial resources. That is a lie. There is money in abundance; what is lacking is the political will, ethics and the real commitment of those who have to make a choice.

If they really want money to appear, let the commitment of setting aside 0.7 per cent of gross national product as official development assistance be met once and for all. That would require $141 billion over and above the current amounts. At the height of deceit, the donor countries are now auditing the cancellations of a debt that they know they will not be able to collect in order to artificially inflate their contributions. Let the foreign debt, which our countries have already paid more than once, be cancelled. That would make it possible to set aside for development the over $400 billion currently used to service a debt that does not cease to grow.

Let the Doha Round for development come to an end and let the $300 billion in agricultural subsidies for the developed countries be removed. That would make it possible to earmark that money to fight rural poverty and food insecurity and to ensure fair prices for the export products of the underdeveloped countries.

Let our right to development be recognized. Let our right to have access to markets, patents and technologies be guaranteed, for those are now the exclusive monopoly of the powerful. Let our countries

be helped in training professionals and scientists and let the brain drain stop.

The non-aligned countries need no alms; we need and demand justice. Let our rights to cultural diversity be respected, as well as our right to the preservation of our heritage, our symbols and our idiosyncrasies. That was the unanimous demand made in Tehran by the non-aligned countries at our ministerial meeting on human rights and cultural diversity.

The non-aligned countries want a more democratic and transparent United Nations in which the General Assembly, its most representative and democratic body, can truly implement the powers vested in it. We need a United Nations with a reformed Security Council, acting in conformity with the mandate granted to it by the Organization's Charter without infringing on the functions and prerogatives of other organs of the system. There must be a Security Council with an expanded membership in line with the current composition of the United Nations, where the underdeveloped countries are the majority. There must be a Security Council with a radical modification to its working methods in order to allow transparency and the access of all Member States to its deliberations.

We need a Human Rights Council that prevents the repetition of the serious mistakes made by the former Commission on Human Rights. The Council should enshrine in its practices the principle that human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent. It should put an end to selectivity and double standards. The non-aligned countries will firmly oppose the devilish schemes of some mighty quarters that, frustrated as they are at failing to achieve their goals, are now attempting to reopen and call into question the agreement reached in the hard and difficult process of institution-building in the Council.

The non-aligned countries will not give up on defence of the precepts that underlie our movement. Among the nations, we will foster relations of friendship based on respect for the principles of sovereignty, equality of rights and the self-determination of peoples.

We will continue to defend the right of the grief-stricken and heroic people of Palestine to have their own State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. We will continue to condemn the genocide committed against it. We will continue to proclaim the right of the people of Puerto Rico to sovereignty and to independence. The non-aligned countries account for nearly two thirds of the membership of the United Nations. Our demands will not be forgotten or our interests ignored.

This was supposed to be the end of my statement as Chair of the Non-Aligned Movement. However, the shameless and gross behaviour of the United States President in this Hall yesterday morning now forces me to utter a few remarks on Cuba's behalf.

With foul language and an arrogant tone, President Bush insulted and threatened some 10 countries. He gave orders in a firm and authoritarian fashion to the General Assembly, and with an officiousness never before seen in this Hall he dished out terms and judgments on a score of countries. It was an embarrassing show — the *delirium tremens* of the world's policeman, the intoxication of imperial power imbued with the mediocrity and cynicism of those who threaten to launch wars in which they know their lives are not at stake.

The President of the United States has no right to pass judgment on any other sovereign nation on this planet. Having powerful nuclear weapons offers no right whatsoever to tread upon the rights of the peoples of the other 191 countries that are represented here. And the determination and courage of peoples should not be underestimated when it comes to defending their rights. After all, what prevails is not the power of cannons but the fairness of the ideas for which you are fighting. The warmongering and menacing President should have already learned this by now: sovereign equality of States, not regime change; respect for sovereignty, not unilateral certifications of good behaviour; respect for international law, not illegal blockades and wars.

President Bush talked about democracy, but we all know that he is lying. He came into office through fraud and deceit. We would have been spared his presence yesterday and would have listened to President Albert Gore talking about climate change and the risks to our species. We also recall how he brazenly supported the coup d'état against the President and the constitution of Venezuela.

He talked about peace, but we know that he is lying. We remember well when he threatened 60 or more countries, which he called "dark corners of the world", saying that he would wipe them off the face of the Earth with pre-emptive surprise attacks. Bush is a strange warrior who, from the rearguard, sends the

young people of his country to kill and to die thousands of kilometres away.

He talked about human rights, but we know that he is lying. He is responsible for the death of 600,000 civilians in Iraq; he authorized tortures at the Guantánamo naval base and at Abu Ghraib; and he is an accessory to the kidnapping and disappearance of people, as well as to the secret flights and the clandestine prisons.

He talked about the fight against terrorism, but we know that he is lying. He has ensured complete impunity for the most abominable terrorist groups which, from Miami, have perpetrated horrendous crimes against the Cuban people. President Bush attacked the new Human Rights Council. He is bleeding from his wound; he is grunting his helplessness. He is haunted by the shamefulness that, during his term in office, the United States cannot even look forward to being a member because elections are through secret ballot. Cuba, on the other hand, was elected as a founding member of the Council with more than two thirds of the votes.

He talked about cooperation, development and prosperity for the rest of the world, but we all know that he is lying. He has been the most selfish and reckless politician we have ever seen. In a world that this year will bear witness to the death of 10 million children under the age of five through preventable diseases, his self-seeking and empty proposals of yesterday are but a sick joke.

President Bush has no moral authority or credibility to judge anyone. He should be held accountable to the world for his crimes. There is a limit to both arrogance and hypocrisy. There is a limit to lies and blackmail. Cuba rejects and condemns every one of the mendacious words uttered yesterday by the President of the United States.

Cuba appreciates the solidarity it has received from the General Assembly in its struggle against the blockade and the aggression that it has been forced to endure for nearly five decades. In particular, I thank the President of Nicaragua, Comrade Daniel Ortega, who is here in the Hall, for his kind words yesterday, and I thank all those who have spoken out for the rights and justice for the Cuban people. Cuba thanks all those who have supported its tenacious fight against terrorism and have raised their voice in favour of the release of five Cuban anti-terrorism fighters unjustly imprisoned in the United States.

Cuba will fight, along with all other members of the Non-Aligned Movement, in order to achieve a more just and democratic international order, in which our peoples can exercise their right to peace and development. We may be accused of being dreamers, but we are fighting with the conviction that today's dreams will be tomorrow's realities. We are fighting — and we will not stop fighting — with the conviction that even when there are individuals without decorum, there are always others who have in themselves the decorum of many and who bear within themselves an entire nations, as well as human dignity.

The meeting rose at 1.25 p.m.